

Antarctica



DIVE 
ADVENTURES
YOUR DIVING HOLIDAY SPECIALIST

Antarctica



Antarctica sits at the “end of the world” and for this reason alone, is enough to compel many visitors to venture on to this amazing continent. Surrounding the South Pole, Antarctica is almost circular in shape, with an arm, the Antarctic Peninsula, extending almost in to South America. The fifth largest of the seven continents, Antarctica totals 14.2 million square kilometres in summer, and doubles in size during the winter months due to ice that forms around the continent. As a result of the massive ice coverage, it is also the highest of the continents with an average elevation of 2300 metres.

Despite the fact that Antarctica is 95% under ice and holds 70% of the earth’s fresh water, it is officially considered a desert, with the added title of being, the coldest and windiest continent on Earth.



Like the early explorers of the 1800s, who were the first to visit this vast and remote continent, today’s adventure seekers revel in the chance to venture into this pristine region, where relatively few human beings have gone before them. Antarctica is the last discovered continent, where wildlife and nature exists harmoniously without any excessive pressures from man. The diverse wildlife and beautiful surroundings of the Antarctic Peninsula, with its amazing display of colours, shapes and moods, is an absolute paradise for divers, adventurers, naturalists and photographers. The Peninsula has relatively mild weather conditions with temperatures as high as 15 degrees Celsius. This mild climate leads to a proliferation of wildlife and, in ‘summer’, endless twilight. The number of individual species that can be observed, and the fact that many are incredibly tame and approachable, allows for fantastic photographic opportunities. A major highlight is the penguin colonies, where several hundred thousand penguins can be found nesting throughout the area. Humpback, Orca, and Minke whales are often spotted nosing out of the frigid waters, while the Elephant, Weddell, Leopard, and Crab-eater seals, are often encountered.



The Antarctica Peninsula is less than two days sailing, via a specially designed, ice-strengthened vessel, from Ushuaia, the southern most town in Argentina. The vessel is very well equipped for the conditions and has all the creature comforts. Your adventure begins the moment you set sail, through the scenic Beagle Channel, then across windy Drake Passage, spotting seabirds of the Southern Ocean on route, right up until you get the first glimpse of icebergs as you near the South Shetland Islands. Upon arrival in Antarctic waters be prepared for sights that you have never witnessed before, and may never encounter again: blue icebergs shaped in surreal formations, spectacular glaciers that can come crashing down into the sea, and jagged peaks jutting out from icy fields. Keeping company with thousands of playful penguins, observing the natural habitat of whales and seals, and cruising around in zodiacs (inflatable boats) between the brilliant white icebergs and ice floes, is an experience that will leave you totally awe-struck for years to come.



Antarctica



Vessels : M/V Grigoriy Mikheev & M/V A Maryshev

Modern, ice-strengthened research vessels, built in Finland for the Russian Academy of Science. Converted for passenger use and ideally suited to expedition cruising in polar areas. They comply with the highest international safety and environmental regulations, as well as the Arctic and Antarctic shipping guidelines.

The ships carry a full complement of Zodiac crafts, for both cruising and landing ashore.

Persons on board Passengers 45, Russian crew 19, Expedition staff 4
Hotel staff 3 and first-aid medical doctor.

Length 66 metres (210 feet)

Breadth 12.8 metres (42 feet)

Draft 3,5 metres (12 feet)

Speed 12,5 knots

Ice class A2

Facilities

The public areas include a dining room which also act as lecture room. There is a cosy bar with reference books and fresh coffee and tea available at all times. The vessel is equipped with a sauna that can hold up to five passengers. The best viewing places on board for spotting wildlife are the bridge and the open-deck areas. As often as maritime regulations and weather conditions allow, the Bridge is open for visits. This is an excellent place to watch ship operations and maintain a lookout for wildlife.



Cabins

Passengers are accommodated in twin or superior cabins. All cabins are 'outside' and most cabins have private facilities. All cabins have a sofa, desk, chair and windows/portholes that open.

Superior cabins 407, 409 and 420 have a double bed en-suite and one sofa bed, VCR and monitor, refrigerator, coffee and tea maker, and windows. Twin cabins with private facilities have one porthole, one upper and one lower berth and a bathroom with shower and toilet. The twin cabins without private facilities have one porthole, one upper and one lower berth and a wash-basin with shared facilities.



There are ample showers and toilets located on Deck 3.

All cabin floors are carpeted. Each cabin has a loudspeaker for general announcements. There is ample storage space under the bed/berths to store most luggage. Soap and shower gel are available in each cabin. All cabins will be cleaned on a daily basis by the Russian attendants. Towels will be changed as desired. Bed sheets will be changed once during the trip. There is no cabin food or drink service available.

Electrical Current

The electrical supply on board is 220 volts, 50 hertz. The electrical outlet sockets are the standard European two round pin system. Passengers coming from countries with a different system will need to bring a suitable adapter.

Medical Facilities

The vessels are equipped with an infirmary with an adequate supply of western medicines and equipment. There will be a Western physician on board.

Communication

The vessel (radio room) is equipped with both direct satellite M phone and facsimile systems. There are also email facilities on board but no access to the internet. Although very reliable, the system can be slow and charges for telephone calls are quite expensive. At some latitudes, service may be temporarily unavailable.



Antarctica



Detailed itinerary

We advise you to arrive one day before departure to arrive in Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina. This will help you to acclimatize to time difference and relax after your long flight from Buenos Aires, Argentina, or Santiago, Chile. Ushuaia is the southern most city in the world located in the shadow of the Andes, right at the Beagle Channel shore, one of world's most stunning locations. Expect wonderful views of the Beagle Channel, and the peaks of the Five Brothers from the airplane on its descent.

Day 1

In late afternoon you make your way to the pier in Ushuaia to board the ship. Have your identification on hand, because you must pass through security. Our staff on board will assist to find your cabin and where to store your dive gear. Take only your regulator with you in your cabin. Every diver is expected to prepare his own equipment well in advance prior to each dive. Bring your own spare parts for your regulators and dry suit in case of leakage or damage. When the Argentine authorities complete immigration, customs and other procedures, the sailing through the scenic waterway of the Beagle Channel begins.

Day 2-3

During these two days we sail across the Drake Passage. When we cross the Antarctic Convergence, we arrive in the circum-Antarctic upwelling zone. The Drake Passage is notorious for high winds and rolling seas. Traversing the Drake is as much a part of the Antarctic experience as penguins and krill. With the right weather conditions your passage will be relatively easy. After breakfast, the education program commences with a presentation that could be about seabirds of the Southern Ocean. In this area we may see Wandering Albatrosses, Grey Headed Albatrosses, Black-browed Albatrosses, Light-mantled Sooty Albatrosses, Cape Pigeons, Southern Fulmars, Wilson's Storm Petrels, Blue Petrels and Antarctic Petrels. Near the South Shetland Islands, we glimpse at the first icebergs. If the winds are favourable we might do our first landing in Antarctic waters in the evening of the third day at Aitcho Island or Penguin Island at the South Shetlands.

These volcanic islands are windswept and often shrouded in mist and fog, but do offer subtle pleasures. There is a nice variety of flora (mosses, lichens and flowering grasses) and fauna.



Day 4-8

A typical itinerary in the Antarctic Peninsula could be as follows. This is a sample only, the final itinerary will be determined by the Dive Master and Expedition Leader on board. This depends on the local conditions.

We start our first day in Antarctica with a mandatory check-out dive at an easy accessible site to get accustomed to the cold water and adjust your weights. Our dive guides will be with you in the water to assist you with your equipment. Diving in Antarctica is serious stuff and safety is our first priority. Being comfortable in the water with your equipment is essential.

We may also make our first landing at either Half Moon Island or Hannah Point, where we will find a nice variety of Gentoo penguins, Chinstraps and southern giant petrels, as well as Elephant seals hauling out on the beach. We will also try to land at Baily Head on the outer rim of Deception Island with a colony of ten thousands of Chinstrap Penguins, and we will attempt to make the exciting hike to Whalers Bay. Deception Island is a huge volcano of which the crater opens into the sea, creating a natural harbour for the ship. Here we find hot springs, an abandoned whaling station, thousands of Cape Pigeons and many Dominican Gulls, Brown and South Polar Skuas

and Antarctic Terns. Wilson's Storm Petrels and Black-bellied Storm Petrels nest in the ruins of the whaling station in Whalers Bay. On our way further South we will sail to Cuverville Island, a small precipitous island, nestled between the mountains of the Antarctic Peninsula and Danco Island. It contains a large colony of Gentoo Penguins and breeding pairs of Brown Skuas. In Neko Harbour we will have the opportunity to set foot on the Antarctic Continent in a magnificent landscape of huge glaciers.

When sailing to Paradise Bay, with its myriad of icebergs and deep cut fjords, we will have the opportunity for zodiac cruising and diving between the icebergs in the inner parts of the fjords. Here we will also have one of the most spectacular wall dives in the Antarctic. The wall drops down to 75m. Thanks to the nearby Shag colony, there is an abundant marine life. We will sail through the Lemaire Channel, famous for its beautiful scenery and great dive sites, to Pleneau and Petermann Island where we can find Adelie Penguins and Blue-eyed Shags. We will visit one of the scientific stations in Antarctica, Vernadsky, which will



give you an insight about the life of modern Antarcticans working on the White Continent. The diving around the station is known to be among the best in the area. Kelp walls and lots of marine life with sponges, anemones, sea-stars, isopods and possibly Antarctic Cod. Sailing north through Neumayer Channel we arrive at the Melchior islands with a very beautiful landscape and again possibilities for zodiac cruising among the icebergs, where we may encounter Leopard Seals, Crabeater Seals and whales. In this area we have good chances to see Humpback Whales and Minke Whales.

Day 9-10

On our way back in the Drake Passage, we again have the chance to see many seabirds and to take advantage of our lecture teams' expertise. You can count on the educational program continuing. Learn more about the seabirds that escort the ship as it crosses the Drake Passage. With the help of the Expedition Team you gain the necessary knowledge to identify birds on the wing. Do not forget to pack your binoculars, they come in handy as you stand watch for whales and albatrosses. In the evening a disembarkation briefing is held and packing can begin.

Day 11

We arrive in the morning in Ushuaia, and disembark after breakfast. Depending on your travel plans you will take your flight home or explore more of Patagonia and Argentina.

Antarctica - Diving & Equipment



Diving in Antarctica is a unique experience for the advanced (dry suit) diver. Not just ice but an amazing underwater world with an interesting marine life filled with creatures that look as if they come from another place. Like giant isopods, worms and fearless seals. The diversity of benthos with the rays of sunlight create an overwhelming and ever-changing spectrum of colours. We take our time to explore the Kelp walls, sea-snails, crabs, Sea Butterflies, various Antarctic fish, Shrubby Horse-tails, jelly-fish, sea-hedgehogs, starfish and krill, and appreciate what only a few divers have seen before you. One of our specialties is Photography, underwater as well as on land. Our trip leaders are well-known professional photographers and filmmakers, who love to share their passion with you.



Carlos Villoch - MagicSea.com

These voyages are not for beginners, you'll have to be an experienced diver (Open Water Advanced) and must be familiar with cold water diving and dry suit diving (at least 20 dives). Before departure you will have to show an internationally accepted diving certificate, diver's log book and a statement from your doctor (not older than two years) stating that you are physically healthy to practice scuba diving. The voyage will start with a check out dive so all divers can get used to the cold water and adjust their weights and equipment. Before each dive, there will be a briefing about the location of the site, the weather and ice conditions and the procedure of the dive. We plan at least two dives per day (except for days at sea), but an exact number of dives cannot be given. It all depends on ice and weather conditions.

Diving in these remote Polar areas is no more dangerous than normal scuba diving as long as one important rule is adhered to - Safety First! All divers looking for dangerous stunts or want to make deep dives are kindly asked to stay at home. There is no decompression chamber, medical care in these polar regions is almost non-existent and there is hardly any infrastructure. Although a doctor is available on board the vessel for first aid assistance, we cannot accept risky ventures from any diver.

Ice diving requires an extensive amount of additional equipment because of the cold weather and water, and the remote location involved. Diving is no fun if you are cold. Divers in cold water may have a higher air consumption rate, expend more energy, and can become more fatigued. Cold water also decreases a diver's ability to perform complex tasks that require manual dexterity. Staying warm is an important element in your polar diving adventure.

The only adequate protection from thermal exposure in the Arctic and Antarctica where the water will be as cold as $-1^{\circ}\text{C}/30^{\circ}\text{F}$, is a dry suit. The type of dry suit you use is not important so long as it fits you, is waterproof and you are comfortable using it. Neoprene dry suits have the benefit of having good stretch and extra insulation. Shell suits provide no extra insulation but are lighter and dry more quickly. Shell suits serve only to keep the diver dry and require extra layers of garments to be worn under the suit. If appropriate, bring a small dry suit repair kit.

Undergarments

The function of the undergarments is to trap air against your body to be warmed. The colder the water, the more (or thicker) layers of undergarments are required. It is recommended that you wear two or three layers, depending on your suit. As the first layer you should wear a set of polypropylene liners. This type of material helps wick any moisture away from the body. As the second layer you should wear thick insulating material, such as fleece, synthetic pile, Thinsulate or similar. As the final and outer layer you may wish to wear a windproof shell. The one piece jump suit style is the most common and comfortable configuration of dive wear and is available in a variety of thickness depending on your dry suit and the water temperature.



The dive operation on board provides tanks, a compressor and weights. Each diver needs to bring his own equipment. Before you come on board you must have tested your equipment to make sure you are comfortable with it and it is not damaged.

Antarctica - Equipment

Equipment required:

- Dry suit with hood
- Thick and warm underwater garment (2 sets), dry gloves or adequate thick wet gloves (make sure they will keep your hands warm in sub-zero waters)
- 2 separate freeze protected regulators. We dive with special cylinders with two separate outlets. The tanks are fitted with a "Y" or "H" valve configuration, with DIN or Yoke (INT) adaptable connections.
- Pressure gauge
- Stabilizing jacket or some kind of BCD with quick release - divers with out BCD trusting only their dry suit for buoyancy control will not be allowed to dive.
- Depth gauge, watch or computer
- Compass
- Knife and a torch
- Mask, fins and snorkel (Please note that the snorkel is a vital part of the safety equipment and will often be used when snorkeling with for example seals)
- Weight belt (weights available on board)

You need two sets of regulators;

1st set includes:

Freeze protected First stage

Second stage (incl. hose)

Hose for BCD

Pressure gauge / computer

2nd set includes:

Freeze protected First stage

Second stage (incl. hose)

Hose for Dry suit



Regulators

Normal regulators will not function in sub-freezing water as both the first and second stage will freeze. You are required to bring two sets of regulators (1st & 2nd stage), suitable for cold-water/ice diving. Some regulators can be fitted with an environmental seal kit, others come environmentally sealed from the manufacturer. To avoid regulator malfunction, regulators must be cared for properly before, during and after diving. Regulators should be kept dry and warm before the dive, store them in your cabin.

Masks

The type of mask you are using is not critical, we recommend using a standard mask and regulator. You may use a full face mask if you prefer, but keep an extra face mask handy in case your regulator free flows. It is best to avoid spitting into the mask for defogging, as this can freeze onto the inside of the mask. Commercial defogging agents work well for ice diving. Straps can also become brittle in cold weather, and it is highly recommended that you bring a spare strap and a spare mask.



Instruments, Gauges and Computers

You must have one tank pressure indicator for each regulator set-up. Some electronic instruments will not function well in sub-freezing temperatures. Liquid crystal displays may be slow to display and batteries will also run low sooner.

Post-dive wear

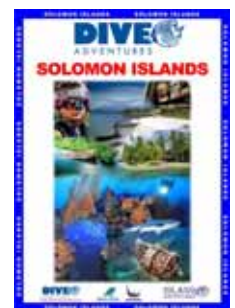
It is important to bring a warm hat and some warm wind and waterproof gloves to wear before, and especially after the dive. You may also wish to bring wind and waterproof spray jacket and pants to keep the cold wind off your wet dry suit.

Dry Suit Accessories

If a hood is not attached to your dry suit you will need to bring one. A 7 mm neoprene hood with face and neck seal is recommended. Regular 7 mm neoprene semidry gloves or mitts may be used with any dry suit and are relatively easy to use. Three finger mitts are warmer than five finger gloves. Special dry gloves that seal against rings on the arm of the dry suit are available, and to promote warmth, short pieces of surgical tubing, or straws can be inserted under the wrist seals to provide a conduit for air to exchange from the suit to the gloves. This type of glove requires additional practice to use, as they can come off your hand if not used correctly.



SOME OF OUR OTHER POPULAR ADVENTURE DESTINATIONS



Visit us on the web
www.diveadventures.com.au

SYDNEY -

Unit 607, 379 Pitt St. Sydney 2000 - Lic. No. 2TA 003537
 PH:(02) 9299 4633 FAX:(02) 9299 4644
 TOLL FREE BOOKINGS: 1800 222 234
 e-mail: sydney@diveadventures.com.au

MELBOURNE -

Unit A 5.2, 63-85 Turner St Port Melbourne VIC 3207 - Lic. No. 31669
 PH:(03) 9646 5945 FAX:(03) 9646 8589
 TOLL FREE BOOKINGS: 1800 242 724
 e-mail: melbourne@diveadventures.com.au

Travel Compensation Fund No. 04589.
 BALLAO HOLDINGS PTY. LTD. A.B.N. 65 003 137 586 T/A DIVE ADVENTURES (INCORPORATED IN NSW)

Your Agent: