

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO PHOTOGRAPHING IN THE POLAR REGIONS

from the award-winning photography team at



POLAR LATITUDES
EXPEDITIONS™



Whatever your level of experience, and whatever camera you happen to carry, our award-winning photography coaches will help you bring home images that capture the unparalleled natural beauty and sheer magic of your Polar adventure.







A once-in-a-lifetime destination offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity

Photographing in the polar regions is many things: surprising, exciting, mind-blowing, and endlessly rewarding. But it can also be challenging, since both Antarctica and the Arctic are like no other places in the world. Whether you're faced with a 360 panorama of white, sub-freezing temperatures and changing weather patterns, or wildlife that can present itself without a moment's notice and disappear just as quickly, every day brings something new. Add to all that the fact that for most photographers, these are once-in-a-lifetime destinations, filled with once-in-a-lifetime opportunities.

To help make sure you make the most of each one, we asked the award-winning photography team at Polar Latitudes Expeditions to put their collective heads together and create this guide, from preparation to packing to getting that unforgettable shot. We don't want you to miss a single opportunity when you travel with us to the most unforgettable places on earth.

Let's start with the camera

Whether you'll be traveling to Antarctica or the Arctic, and whether you're packing a fully tricked-out SLR set-up or the humble camera phone in your pocket, you've come to the right place. These regions are ground zero for photographers of every level of experience and skill set who want to capture amazing images. But there is much to consider. So, let's dig in.

One mistake some people make is to buy a bunch of expensive new camera equipment immediately before a big trip, and then arrive on the ship unfamiliar with how to use it. We recommend bringing a camera, or cameras, that you are familiar and comfortable with, so you don't lose out on a single opportunity while you're fiddling with settings that you're just getting to know.

On that note, if you're unfamiliar with any aspect of your camera when you head north or south, don't hesitate to reach out to our professional onboard photo coaches. They are here to help you make the most of your photography journey. And a quick tip: if camera settings seem overwhelming to you, you can always set your camera to AUTO and let it handle the details. The most important thing – not missing the shot!

Take advantage of our coaches

On every voyage, you will have at your disposal a world-class photography coach. Our coaches are there for you, to answer all your questions, assist you with your gear, and share what they've learned over a lifetime of professional photography. We highly recommend attending their presentations and bending their ear for advice on shooting in these unique and challenging environments. This may be your first time in Antarctica or the Arctic, but their knowledge runs many years and excursions deep.









Should you bring multiple cameras?

It's not essential, but if you are a serious photographer, it is worth bringing more than one camera and a range of lenses. There are several advantages to this. Firstly, you will have a variety of image options – wide angle lenses are often better for landscapes, whereas telephoto lenses are very useful for close-ups of wildlife. Secondly, you'll often be shooting from a zodiac, which could be a little bouncy, and there could be salt water spraying into the boat (and on your equipment!) – not a great environment for changing lenses. And thirdly, if one camera stops working, it's good to have another one to

Using your phone camera?

Your phone camera is also a good back-up to keep with you, and most phones have excellent video capability as well these days. Video is a great way to capture not just the image, but the overall sense of being there.

If you're going to be out in the field using your phone camera, it's important to protect it with a strong shockproof and weatherproof case. Phones generally don't come with a safety strap like a camera. Bring a lanyard so you can hang the phone round your neck or some other device like a wristband which prevents the phone from slipping out of your grasp. Most likely the phone is not only your camera – it's also your main communications and digital life support system, so it needs securing and protecting.

What about a GoPro?

Got one? Go for it! There's some great action photography to be had!

A dry bag: This is essential

Weather in the polar regions is unpredictable, to say the least. Wind, rain, snow – any or all could be in the forecast on any given outing. And Zodiacs are particularly susceptible to spraying salt water. So whenever heading out on excursions, it's really important to have your camera in a waterproof dry bag. If you forget to bring one, you can always pick one up in Ushuaia, and we sell an excellent one in our on-board gift shop.



Some other advice regarding camera accessories:

- Lenses: 24mm to 300mm lenses should cover your needs. We've seen massive lenses on board, but 300mm is more than enough to get you close to the action.
- Memory cards: Bring more than one, preferably 3-4, and 64GB. They'll fill up fast. And sorry, but no camera stores where we're going.
- A polarizing filter: Good to have, in these often highly reflective and monochromatic environments.
- Tripods: Up to you, but we recommend leaving the tripod home. Or if you really want to bring one, something very compact or a monopod. They can be cumbersome, and you'll be on the move a lot; so frankly, there won't be much opportunity to use it.
- External hard drive: It's definitely good to have one along, to download your files at the end of each day, and to have everything backed up and secure.
- Manual: Never a bad idea to bring your camera manual along, just in case.
- Flash. You won't really need one, so leave it home.

An important note about batteries

Bring extra batteries! Two at least, three – even better. In cold climates like Antarctica, batteries will drain much faster. You can mitigate that to some extent by keeping spare batteries inside your expedition jacket close to your body. And yes, we have ample power outlets onboard to recharge them at the end of the day. But the last thing you want is to come face to face with the world's most hilarious penguin and have your camera's battery suddenly run out.

Bringing cameras in a Zodiac

For zodiac cruising and going ashore – don't take too much gear. Try to keep it simple. There are a few reasons. One, getting in and out of a zodiac, you'll want to be as unencumbered as possible. You might be climbing over slippery rocks at a landing site while the boat moving a bit... so anything more than a dry bag can get a bit awkward. Also, because of new protocols to prevent the spread of avian flu, you are not allowed to put things on the ground. You'll have to keep everything with you. Juggling cameras is tricky, so it is best to have just one main camera and maybe put your phone in a well-protected pocket or dry bag. Remember those spare batteries for your camera and make sure your phone battery is topped up. A small action camera may be handy to video the zodiac journey to the shore, but remember that in many places, you'll have to keep it on your person once you're on shore.











The difference between getting the shot, and creating an unforgettable photograph

Having a photogenic location doesn't automatically mean that every image you make will be a masterpiece. To increase your chances, be sure to attend the presentation from our photo coach at the beginning of your journey. In the meantime, here are a few quick and simple tips:

When shooting in a bright white environment, a polarizing filter can help add contrast. When shooting a subject in front of a bright background, add a stop or two, or your subject will come out overly dark. (It may sound counter-intuitive, but trust us on this one.) Conversely, if it's purely a majestic landscape or iceberg you're looking to capture on a bright sunny day, try compensating by going down a stop or two, to prevent the subject from getting blown out. If you have time, take a couple of shots at different exposure compensations, so you'll have options later.

The Arctic and Antarctic regions are immense and powerful in scale. To properly capture that scale, a penguin or a person in the foreground can help put the mountains and glaciers in context. A simple bird atop an iceberg can accomplish the same thing. Always keep your eyes open, and your camera in hand.

If possible, get down low to capture wildlife from their own perspective, and seek angles and perspectives that will add visual interest beyond just "getting the shot." Aim for photographs that capture action, behavior, and beautiful portraiture. Try to create images which tell stories.

Get up early. Stay up late. You've probably heard it a million times, but it bears repeating: The best light for landscape photography is around dawn and dusk. It is always worth trying to witness these times of day. When you get back home, you can rest.





Choosing the best time of year for photography

The polar travel season runs virtually year-round, with Antarctica voyages taking place from Late October through early March, and Arctic travel taking place from May through September. Whenever you go, the opportunities for great photography are endless. But it's worth noting that there are certain and sometimes subtle differences throughout the season. So, here's a bit of a cheat sheet:

Antarctica

During the shoulder seasons, November and late February/March, the sun sits lower in the sky, offering spectacular sunsets that can last for hours. It's also when icebergs tend to be grander and more plentiful, so if landscape photography is your primary interest, you might lean towards this time of year.

- December and January are peak summer months in Antarctica, a time when wildlife is most abundant, penguin rookeries are at maximum capacity, and seal sightings are particularly common. Also, during the summer months, weather is typically less volatile, so chances of a full calendar of sunny days are greater. Wildlife aficionados take note.
- Got whales in your sights? Chances of spotting whales are high any time of year. But the greatest opportunity to catch that perfect breaching whale photograph is likely to be in the latest part of the season, late February through early March. This is when whales come to gorge on krill, and are most curious about visitors, with or without camera.

The Arctic

- The chief difference between early season and late season in the Arctic boils down to light. Early season offers a lot more of it, with 18-20 hours of daylight through May, and increasing through the summer high season to 24 hours of continuous sun (known as "midnight sun") in June and July. In fall, nightfall slowly returns, as daylight shrinks to 12 to 16 hours. Still, a pretty long day.
- While more sunlight can mean more to see and more time to shoot, in late season the green tundra begins to burst into autumnal colors, bringing more variation in color, and with the return of the rising and setting sun, more drama overall.
- Early season offers more stable weather, and wildlife is at its most active. Fox cubs begin to emerge from their dens, and seabirds return to their nests to raise their chicks. The early season also means more sea ice, meaning polar bears are more likely to be found closer to the shore of archipelagos such as Svalbard.
- Other highlights for August/September in the Arctic: Spectacular stargazing returns, enhanced by the total lack of light pollution, which also greatly increases the chance to witness the otherworldly Northern Lights.





Rare voyages offer rare opportunities

Another thing you might want to consider as a photographer: special voyages that take advantages of rare natural phenomenon. These voyages present you with an opportunity that few photographers ever get – a chance to capture nature at its finest, most magical, and most elusive. For example, we offer two expeditions this upcoming 2026 Arctic season that will give our onboard photographers a front row seat to a total solar eclipse, part of an unforgettable journey into some of the world's most protected and spectacular natural environments.

Consider South Georgia

South Georgia deserves a special mention to photographers, for its incredible scale, its diverse landscapes, and its vast array of wildlife, from whales, to elephant seals, to birdlife, including a range of penguins, none more spectacular than the majestic Emperor, gathering in numbers exceeding many thousands, and filling the landscape for as far as the eye can see. It's one of the most spectacular sights in the natural world. If the sound of that piques your interest, look into one of our Falklands, South Georgia, and Antarctica voyages.





Win your first photography award right on board

Need a little added incentive? Near the end of each journey, as we head back to port, we host an onboard photography contest, led by our photography coach. Everyone is invited to submit photos, finalist are selected by our photography coach, and winners are chosen by our passenger-wide “applause-o-meter.” This is always a great event – your chance to show your stuff, and have a lot of fun, too.

Something to remember us by

As an added bonus, our photography coaches will be shooting alongside you on your voyage. And before you leave, you’ll be given a keepsake of photographs, shot by them, to take with you, along with your own great shots!

A final request: respect the wildlife, the land, and your peers

- Give wildlife plenty of room. Remember to stay 5 meters back
- In Antarctica, due to concerns about spreading avian flu, lying, sitting, kneeling, or squatting down low is not allowed. These rules are set by IATTO, Antarctica’s governing body.
- Respect the other photographers and travelers We all want to get great photos. Be aware of those around you. Try not to step in front of another photographer while he or she is trying to get “the perfect shot.”
- Respect the local people, culture and wildlife.
- And leave no trace.



LET'S DO THIS!





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