

## Photography in Antarctica

Successful photography can be a major component of your experience in one of the most spectacular and special places in the world, and we want to help you make the most of your chance to capture some wonderful images. Antarctica will show us dramatic landscapes, electrifying sunlight, intimate moments with wildlife, sites steeped in history, and doubtless some surprises along the way. Whether you are packing a camera-phone or a full DSLR rig there will be endless opportunities to capture images that will be cherished for a lifetime. Understanding some of the challenges with photography in Antarctica ahead of time will help you be better prepared so that when the moment comes you'll be well-equipped and have a few tricks up your sleeve to pull off the perfect shot.

First things first - it's important to pack the right camera equipment before you leave home so that once you're on board the ship you're ready to go. Below are a few frequently asked questions along with our Photography Coaches' recommendations.

### ***What kind of camera should I bring?***

You should bring the camera that you are most familiar with or would most like to practice using and learn more about. Keep it simple - outdoor photographers are always on the move, being efficient with equipment means more time enjoying the experience and less time fussing with overpacked bags.

### ***But I only have a bulky DSLR (or compact point & shoot, iPhone ... insert your camera here)?***

There will be a wide variety of cameras and photographers on board, from seasoned vets, hobbyists with professional equipment, and casual snappers with pocket cameras and iPhones. There's no right or wrong camera to bring. Some cameras are able to capture higher-quality images in certain circumstances but there will be opportunities to learn about your own equipment and perhaps even be able to make some new purchasing decisions with some newfound knowledge. Every camera has its strengths and we always see amazing shots from iPhones to pro-DSLRs. At the end of the trip everyone will go home with a fantastic record of our adventures in our expedition keepsake.

### ***Should I buy a new camera before I leave?***

Again, there's no right or wrong camera to bring. However, if you're itching to buy a new camera, but you're concerned about the learning curve, don't worry - take some time ahead to read the quick-start guide, and bring the full camera manual along. Most camera manuals are available online from the manufacturer for portability on your tablet, laptop or mobile. Our Photography Coach will be on hand to help one-on-one if you need help navigating around new equipment.

### ***Will I be able to charge my batteries on board the ship?***

Yes! There is a steady power supply on the ship and there are regular 'down-times' between landings and nighttime to recharge batteries, backup images, and get ready for the next shoot. Voltage on board is 110V/60Hz (American standard) and suites include 5 USB ports for charging. Bringing a charger for your camera/battery is essential. Spare batteries are highly recommended as the cold tends to drain batteries faster.

### ***Are there any photography skills I need to know before starting the trip?***

The Photography Coach will give a lecture on board at the early part of the voyage covering some fundamentals. The best advice we can give in advance of the expedition is to pick up your camera, grab your camera manual, and do a little reading and practice ahead of time. Even just seeing some of the terminology in advance will help better understand it once we start using some technical jargon on the trip. Some of the features to be familiar with include:

- **Image Size** - Read up about the Image Size and Image Quality options of your camera and make sure it is set to the largest file size and best quality setting at the start of the trip. We'll talk about making adjustments to that early on.
- **Focusing** - If your camera has a focus area control (usually a thumb pad) read up a little on how it works and practice with it a little ahead of time - try using it to focus on a pet or a child. In the heat of the moment with wildlife moving around it will help you get sharp images if you have practiced a little in advance with selecting the focus area.
- **Exposure Compensation +/-** - This is our go-to control for quick adjustments to the brightness or darkness of an image. With constantly changing light and the contrast of whites and blacks it's one of the easiest ways to get your pictures just right.
- **Flash** - Learn how to turn your camera flash off. We won't use flash anywhere around the wildlife so knowing how to turn that off is important. If you were contemplating bringing a flash unit maybe think twice, we'll only be able to use those on board and rarely in the field. In general, the available natural light is abundant and beautiful.
- **Sound** - Learn how to turn off any audio/sound effects/alarms on your camera (BEEPS!) or any other electronics you may bring onshore - again, this is to minimize our disturbance to the wildlife.

### ***Do I need a tripod?***

Much of our shooting will be done from zodiacs in generally fair sea conditions, ashore at the landings, and on board the ship. We'll be moving on and off shore a lot and a tripod can be a bit unwieldy. Most cameras (and/or lenses) come equipped with Image Stabilization which is well suited to the type of situations we'll be in. Having said that, if working with a tripod is important to you (or if you are bringing a super-telephoto lens or plan to shoot video) and you're accustomed to travelling with one then by all means bring it. A mono-pod is a good, more-compact alternative and can work well for many of the situations we will be in.

### ***How do I keep my camera safe in the extremes of Antarctica?***

The delicate electronics in cameras need to be cared for and moisture can be highly detrimental, especially combined with salt-water. We do need to be extra careful to keep our camera equipment dry, especially moving in and out of the zodiacs. Keeping your camera in a hard, waterproof case like a Pelican™ Case is ideal, although a dry bag works quite well too - add a small towel to give your camera some cushioning. Otherwise any weather-resistant bag will help - or just keep your camera under your jacket! Remember to always secure zips and latches on camera cases each and every time. The more expensive your equipment is the more you should consider investing in protection for it.

### *How much storage (SD cards) should I bring?*

This is not an easy question to answer because it will depend entirely on the image file size your camera records and how many pictures you intend to shoot. We will be seeing plenty of amazing things, so we recommend at least four 16GB cards for a 10 mega-pixel camera and at least four 32GB cards for a 24 mega-pixel camera. Erring on the side of more rather than less is the safest bet. Regardless of the capacity of your cards, it's always a good idea to bring at least two in case one fails. We recommend bringing more, smaller-sized cards rather than fewer, larger-sized cards to reduce the risk of loss or damage.

### *My camera system has interchangeable lenses - which should I bring?*

Most likely if you've owned a DSLR or any camera system with a range of lenses for any length of time you have a pretty good handle on what you like to shoot and which lenses you'll want to bring on the expedition. We recommend covering a wide range of focal lengths with as few lenses as possible.

Wildlife is one of the main attractions in Antarctica and capturing wildlife images is typically one of the more challenging aspects of photography because of the animals' tendency to be elusive and at a distance - this is not always the case in Antarctica! The animals' behavior and our guidelines allow us to be often relatively close. For wildlife photography, we recommend a telephoto lens with a focal length of at least 300mm (in 35mm equivalent) with up to 500mm as a bonus. Our Photography Coaches usually bring either an 80-400mm or a 200-500mm telephoto lens for their long shots. An 80-400mm has an especially versatile reach for a compact lens and is a good 'traveler'. If you have a point and shoot, or other smaller camera, the manual will often give your camera lens range in 35mm equivalent. Many compact cameras have a surprisingly long reach!

Other than a telephoto it will be nice to have coverage at wide-angles (~14-35mm) and normal ranges (35-105mm) for landscapes, special effects, portraits etc.

### *Do I need to bring a laptop?*

If you're a keen photographer taking a lot of images and you need the additional storage capacity and/or to do some photo-editing as part of your day to day, by all means bring one along. Many travelers are packing a tablet or laptop anyway. One important note on an issue that we do encounter: if you are using a Windows PC and are planning to shoot in RAW file format, be sure to install the RAW CODEC for your camera model and operating system before departure.

### *Are there any other special pieces of equipment I should bring?*

There are a few non-essential items that could help you get more from your photography. These could include: a remote control (or other system for using the 'Bulb' feature of your camera), a Neutral Density filter to fit your 'normal' (35-105mm) lens (this is particularly helpful if you're interested in special effects or video), a polarizing filter (also usually best for the 'normal' range lens), a 'step up ring' (useful for fitting one expensive filter to several lenses of varying thread diameter), a small towel to pat your equipment dry, lens cloth or LensPen™, spare battery and charger. **We strongly recommend a waterproof bag or case to store and carry your equipment in.**