



HIKING

ACTIVITY MANUAL



OCEANWIDE
EXPEDITIONS

PIONEER

Oceanwide has been a pioneer in Arctic and Antarctic expedition cruises since 1993, so we feel right at home on land and at sea. As we carry several guides on board our motor vessels, we can split up passengers into smaller groups for landings. This allows us to provide a “small group” experience among like-minded travelers, which is particularly useful for hiking groups.



GENERAL INFORMATION FOR PASSENGERS

- Both in the Arctic and Antarctica, we offer dedicated hiking and snowshoe voyages
- On all of our ships there are options of two to three different guided walks (easy to challenging) per landing in the Arctic
- Walks vary in length, difficulty, distance, and elevation climbed, so there are always walks that suit your ability
- Hiking on Antarctic voyages is more limited owing to the glaciers, ice fields and terrain encountered
- On hiking voyages to the Arctic, we also offer several full-day walks with a packed lunch
- We offer the free rental of lightweight snowshoes and rubber boots with good walking profile on m/v Plancius, Hondius and Ortelius
- There is no extra charge for hiking. Please see our dates for dedicated hiking and snowshoe voyages

Because more people are becoming interested in active polar voyages, Oceanwide now offers more trips with an extended hiking option.

In the early season, we use snowshoes for walking on the deep and slushy snow. It is easy to use snowshoes, so everyone can do it, and it's an exciting way to explore the polar wilderness.

Please note:

- Passengers can choose to skip walks and instead stay on board. But due to safety reasons, passengers are not allowed to wander on land unaccompanied
- Eating food / snacks in Antarctica is not allowed on shore per Antarctic Treaty / IAATO regulations
- In Antarctica, all human waste has to be brought back to the ship. This means toilet visits on land are not allowed (also per Antarctic Treaty / IAATO regulations), so a solution can be a “pee-bottle.” Such items, however, have to be brought by passengers themselves.



ARCTIC

In late summer, when the tundra is relatively dry and rivers are fordable, we offer special hiking expeditions with our motor vessels. This type of trip is marked “H” in the trip description. During these expeditions, passengers are offered various hiking options. Regular trips offer shorter leisurely excursions, medium demanding hikes, or more strenuous hikes. Landing duration is usually two to four hours.

On designated hiking trips (H), however, we aim to explore more of the interior of Svalbard, and some hiking trips take around six to eight hours. We cross tundra, small rivers and streams, and sometimes steep terrain. Stamina, equipment, and an energetic attitude are essentials.

The long hikes of our special hiking trips are meant for the keen hiker who wants to go faster, longer, and higher than what we normally offer. These long hiking options (H) may drop the full-day hiking party at one location and collect them at another. Full-day hikes may also include a packed lunch. The group size is limited for these hikes, and reservations must be made in advance.

Polar bear danger makes hiking in Svalbard too dangerous without an armed guide nearby. This means there is no turning back once the hike has started, so be aware of your own limitations before signing up for a long hike. The group can walk only as far, high, and fast, as the slowest person in the group.

Hikes (with or without snowshoes) are offered outside glaciated terrain. Walks on potentially crevassed areas are labeled “mountaineering” (M) trips, and these (i.e., during Basecamp voyages in Antarctica) are specifically highlighted in travel offers and documents. Specially designated mountaineering trips (M) have at least one UIAGM-certified mountain guide leading ascents and descents. Hiking (H) and regular landings will offer very limited access to glaciers and only on crevasse-free areas.

ANTARCTICA

Antarctic hiking options are more limited, because the Southern Hemisphere landscape topography is so different compared to the north. Antarctica’s terrain is very rugged, consisting mainly of steep cliffs and dangerously crevassed glaciers. There are no vegetated areas, such as the tundra of the Arctic.

Our normal trips to the beautiful island of South Georgia offer longer hikes for more active passengers. As South Georgia is sub-Antarctic, it is less covered by ice and therefore has more hiking possibilities. For instance, the last section of the famous Shackleton walk is fascinating to retrace.



Please Note:

Hiking, like all of our activities, depends on safe weather and ice conditions – more so even than in the Arctic. Also, Antarctic hiking is limited by strict environmental regulations.

In the early season, deep snow is present, and snowshoes are therefore provided on board. But as in the Arctic, walks on potentially crevassed areas fall under the label “mountaineering” (M), and these options (i.e., during Basecamp voyages) are specifically highlighted in travel offers and documents. Special mountaineering trips (M) have at least one UIAGM-certified mountain guide accompanying. Hiking (H) and regular landings will only offer a very limited access to glaciated or ice-covered terrain due to the ever-present risk of crevasses.

CLOTHING FOR THE ARCTIC & ANTARCTICA

As conditions can change rapidly, make sure you have clothing and equipment suitable for the worst weather. What follows is a list of REQUIRED personal clothing and gear to bring:

- Rubber boots with a good profile for Zodiac landings and walks (only on Rembrandt van Rijn)
- Preferably also gaiters (Gamaschen) when wearing boots
- 25-liter rucksack
- One-liter water bottle
- "Pee bottle" for Antarctica, such as a wide-opening Nalgene bottle (there are special ones for women in outdoor shops)
- Thermal underwear
- Fleece vest or jacket
- Down jacket or spare fleece jacket
- Breathable (e.g., Gore-Tex®) jacket and trousers
- Trekking trousers Warm fleece hat
- Turtleneck (neck gaiter)
- Thermal under-gloves (fleece finger gloves)
- Warm gloves or mittens
- Thick hiking socks (and spare socks) Thin under-socks (for blisters)
- Good sunglasses
- Sun cream / sunblock
- Straps to tie snowshoes on backpack
- Waterproof bag (for camera equipment), especially for the Zodiac



Optional items:

- Hiking / walking poles
- Binoculars
- Additional thermos or bottle

The following items will be provided by Oceanwide:

- Insulated rubber boots for Zodiac landings and walks on m/v Hondius, Plancius and Ortelius
- MSR lightweight snowshoes

Please note:

Cotton clothing like normal T-shirts and jeans are not advisable, as cotton tends to get wet and stay wet while hiking in a cold environment. Use thermal underwear and special hiking trousers instead!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How long are the walks?

In the Arctic, hikes vary between two to three hours in the morning and afternoon, and eight hours for full-day hikes. In Antarctica, the situation is different, as we are not allowed to eat or leave toilet waste behind (per Antarctic Treaty / IAATO regulations). Therefore, our time on land in Antarctica is limited. We plan to go on shore immediately after breakfast or lunch and return for the next meal. This means that there is only about three to four hours maximum for the hikes.

How difficult are the walks?

In the Arctic, you need to be fit to be able to do more difficult and demanding hikes, but there is always an option to join one of the less demanding hikes. Our guides can advise you on a hike. In Antarctica, hikes are in general not too difficult for someone in good health. You need to be able to do a four- to five-hour walk in fairly rugged terrain with some up and downhill walking. No other special skills are required. Please note that we are going into fairly unknown terrain where there can be rocks, snow, mud, or a frozen hard surface to walk on. We can sometimes only tell more about the difficulty of a hike when we're at the spot. The weather can also make a walk more easy or difficult.

How fast do we walk?

Normally, the walking speed is fairly slow. The lack of a footpath and loose rocks / snow demand a slow speed. Everyone wants to enjoy the views and take pictures, so that also makes the walking slow. There will be frequent stops.

Do we walk as one big group or do we split up into smaller groups?

We normally split up into two to three smaller groups, providing an easy and more difficult option. We carry at least three guides on board our motor ships, so every group has at least one guide. The more difficult walks often take two guides.

Are the hikes optional? Can I stay behind on shore?

Passengers can of course stay on board during a walk, but they cannot stay behind on land for safety reasons. All the guides are needed for the hikes, and passengers are not allowed to stay behind without being accompanied by a guide, according to regulations.

Is it possible to take food on the hikes?

In the Arctic, eating is allowed. In Antarctica, eating snacks on shore is not allowed (also per Antarctic Treaty / IAATO regulations) to prevent the spreading of contaminants and alien plant species.

Is there a way to use the toilet?

In the Arctic, toilet visits are allowed. In Antarctica, no toilet visits are possible on land (once more, per Antarctic Treaty / IAATO regulations). If you have a frequent need for the toilet, please take a pee bottle (e.g., Nalgene bottle with a wide opening, sold in outdoor shops, or another field toilet option) on your hike. Please note that Oceanwide does not provide a field toilet. Try not to drink too much before the walk, and during the walk only drink when thirsty.

If I bring my own hiking boots, do I have to carry the OEX-provided rubber boots in my pack?

Except for guests on Rembrandt van Rijn, we encourage all guests to wear the muckboots provided onboard. If you bring your own boots you may need to carry the muckboots with you on longer hikes that have a different drop off/pick up point. Our guides all wear the muckboots out of choice as they are the best footwear for the terrain we are in.



Where do we walk in Svalbard?

Each voyage will be slightly different but all coastlines of Svalbard have good opportunities and different types of hike ranging from steep scree to rolling tundra landscapes, each voyage itinerary will be finally decided by the Expedition Leader based on weather, ice and wildlife.

Are the snowshoes already on board?

Yes, one pair for each passenger.

Do I need special skills for the snowshoe hikes?

The snowshoe hiking demands no extra skills besides a normal, good state of health. You need to be able to do a six-hour walk in fairly rugged terrain, with some up and downhill walking. No other special skills are required. Still, when participants are not in good health and are not capable of at least a four-hour walk, they may have to stay on board for safety reasons and so as not to overly slow down the hike. If you have any questions about the required skills, please contact our office.

How long are the snowshoe hikes? How often do we go out?

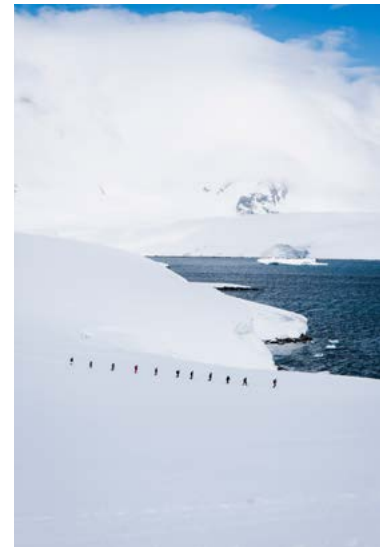
We offer snow hiking excursions every full day of the expedition when snow conditions allow. Often we go out for morning and afternoon of about three to four hours. We may also plan to do a couple of day hikes of about six hours walking time. On these day hikes, a packed lunch will be taken.

What kind of terrain can I expect?

On Svalbard, there are virtually no hiking paths. Also, almost everything will be covered by snow, so we have to find our own route. Svalbard comprises a wide range of different landscapes: rugged, barren mountains, and crevassed glaciers exist alongside vast tundra. As glaciers are normally crevassed and dangerous, we will not venture out on any glaciers. Fairly easy excursions on snowshoes will be made to see bird colonies. Besides gentle walks on the wide tundra, we will try to climb some accessible peaks to enjoy fantastic views of mountains and fjords. While these climbs demand some stamina, they are optional.

Are there options to do an easy or more difficult hike?

Yes, we normally offer three hiking options: easy (near shore), moderate (viewpoint), and more strenuous (higher peaks and longer walks).



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