



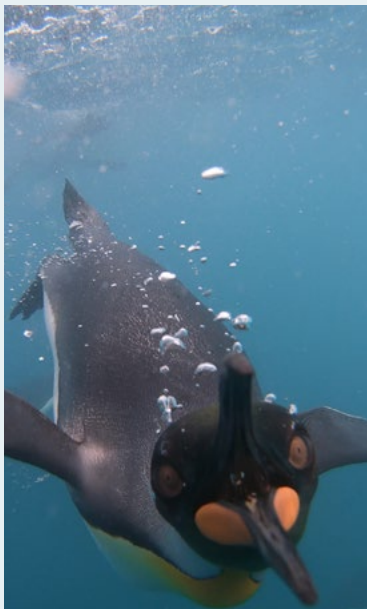
# SNORKELING

ACTIVITY MANUAL



**OCEANWIDE**  
EXPEDITIONS





## SNORKELING ACTIVITIES IN ANTARCTICA AND THE ARCTIC

All of our polar voyages provide maximum firsthand contact with local wildlife and terrain, and our intimate knowledge of the seas allows us to also give you an unparalleled adventure below the waves.

Join us on one of our Arctic or Antarctic snorkeling cruises - true expeditions in every sense of the word, during which you will have access to some of the most scenic snorkel sites in the polar regions.

With this exciting activity, you can explore an icy world, encounter exotic marine life, and enjoy the beautiful interplay of ice, light, and water in a rarely-seen underwater environment.

The details of our snorkeling sessions and itineraries are based on the extensive experience of our international guides, who have worked in the polar regions for many years in various capacities

**When you snorkel with us, you get the best polar adventure in the most capable hands.**

## GENERAL INFORMATION ON OUR SNORKELING ACTIVITY

- Snorkelers must have basic drysuit experience.
- We aim for one to two snorkeling sessions daily (one in the morning and one in the afternoon).
- Our ability to snorkel depends on local ice and weather conditions.
- All snorkel guides are certified and experienced experts in their field.
- You must bring your snorkeling gear.
- We snorkel directly from Zodiacs.
- In both Antarctica and the Arctic, we may observe sea squirts, squat lobsters, spider crabs, soft corals, anemones, peacock worms, dogfish, sea snails, crabs, sea butterflies, shrubby horsetails, jellyfish, sea hedgehogs, kelp walls, and several species of starfish.
- Details on booking this activity can be found on our Dates & Rates webpage.



### ARCTIC SNORKEL PROGRAM

Spitsbergen & Greenland

The farthest reaches of the far north are home to some of the world's most iconic wildlife, of which polar bears and Arctic foxes are just a part. On our Arctic snorkel program, you can encounter wondrous sea life and beautiful ice formations that truly distinguish this region from Antarctica.

We may also encounter seals and walrus in the Arctic. When these curious animals are close to Zodiacs, we may try to observe them. However, note that we cannot snorkel with walrus for safety reasons.

### ANTARCTIC SNORKEL PROGRAM

Antarctic Peninsula, Falkland Islands, & South Georgia

Antarctica's dazzling icecaps, colossal glaciers, and towering mountains are rivaled only by the sub-Antarctic islands' white-sand beaches and lush flora. Both areas host many penguins, whales, seals, and seabirds.

Our Antarctic snorkel program is similar to our Arctic program. We snorkel directly from our Zodiacs, encountering polar marine life, and sometimes shipwrecks.

You may observe penguins, fur seals, and perhaps even leopard seals during these snorkels. Many of the sub-Antarctic islands are also rich in krill, one of the prime food sources for many marine species and, therefore, highly useful in locating wildlife.

## WEATHER IN THE POLAR REGIONS

Arctic voyages are organized during the milder Northern Hemisphere summer (May to September). During this period, the sun shines 24 hours per day, and temperatures often range between 5 and 15°C (41 to 59°F).

In Antarctica's Southern Hemisphere summer (December to February), temperatures are generally close to freezing, varying between -5 to 8°C (23 to 46°F). Combined with the strong katabatic winds of this area, the cold can often feel even colder.

Warm and waterproof clothing (and a flexible attitude) are required for both regions, especially Antarctica. Severe weather may cancel landings and snorkels, as excursions can only occur in safe conditions.

## PROGRAM CHANGES DUE TO WEATHER AND ICE

We know our snorkel destinations in great detail and always explore new sites, but every snorkel session can encounter surprises. Remembering that nature calls the shots in the polar regions is important. Personal expectations that are not met are not grounds for reimbursement.

Please note that our itinerary is always subject to safe local conditions. It is always possible that ice, weather, or wildlife will force us to change our sailing schedule. It is also possible that certain bays or fjords will be closed because of ice.

In such cases, we always have planned alternatives. But again, these alternatives are not grounds for reimbursement. When changing the itinerary, we assure you that the captain, expedition leader, and snorkel leader will do their utmost to provide you with an equally good replacement program.



## SNORKEL EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS

Our polar snorkel voyages are suitable for beginners. They are meant for snorkelers who are familiar with drysuit snorkeling.

The first snorkel of our voyage will be a "check snorkel" to try out your gear and assure our snorkel leader that you have enough experience to participate. This is for your safety and that of our guides.

If our snorkel leaders feel that any snorkeler does not have the necessary experience, they can exclude that snorkeler from the snorkeling program. In this event, Oceanwide Expeditions cannot be held responsible and will grant no claims for reimbursement.

All snorkelers must always follow the instructions of snorkel leaders and guides. All snorkelers participate 100% at their own risk, which is also the case during land excursions.

## EXPEDITION TEAM, EXCURSIONS, & SNORKEL LEADERS

Our expedition team consists of one expedition leader and multiple guide-lecturers. All members are extensively experienced in working in the polar wilderness.

The plans for each day are covered during a recap, where the outline of the following day's activities is presented. Before all snorkeling activities, the snorkel guides will hold a safety and location briefing.

Our voyages feature lectures, presentations, and workshops led by experts, with specializations ranging from history to biology, to educate our guests about the polar regions in which they will be snorkeling and exploring.

Participants must understand English or the advertised language. Please note that those unable to communicate will be removed from the program as this presents a safety hazard.

## SNORKEL PROCEDURES

### Approach to snorkel site

In normal circumstances, the number of snorkelers per Zodiac is eight passengers, with one snorkel guide. Always watch your valuable gear when embarking and disembarking the Zodiacs. Oceanwide is not liable for the loss of individual equipment.

### Check snorkel

The voyage starts with a check snorkel so that all snorkelers can get used to the cold water and try out their equipment. Before each snorkel, there will be a briefing about the snorkel site, weather and ice conditions, and the procedure of the snorkel.

### Currents

Water currents can be present anywhere and at any time. The snorkel guides will select a safe snorkel spot and also give information about returning to the Zodiacs if needed. Normally, there is very little current where we snorkel, if any.

### Snorkel buddy

Snorkel sessions will use the buddy system. The snorkel guide will not be in the water to accompany and lead snorkelers. Instead, snorkel guides stay on the surface to ensure the safety of all participants. Snorkelers are expected to be experienced enough to read their compasses and depth gauges and look after each other. Buddy teams are important, so we let our snorkelers match themselves as much as possible. In cases where snorkelers have not paired up or are in doubt, snorkel guides sit with snorkelers to discuss their expectations and experience. We try to pair people with similar interests and experiences. If there is an uneven number of snorkelers and three-person groups are not feasible, snorkel guides will accompany snorkelers.

### Snorkel guide-to-guest ratio

Our programs allow for eight snorkelers per snorkel guide, with a preferred maximum of 24 snorkeling passengers per voyage. Groups larger than 24 will need to split snorkel activities, and we also may reduce the number of snorkels so that we can safely manage activities.

### Drifting pack ice

This is a real hazard. If pack ice approaches while snorkelers are underwater, it can be hard to see people if they surface among it. For this reason, it is important to only snorkel around loosely floating bergy bits and remain clear of brash or pack ice. Large icebergs must be avoided.

### Equipment

Once you have settled into your cabin, you will be given an area to store and hang your equipment. Every snorkeler is expected to prepare their own equipment before each snorkel session.

### Number of snorkeling sessions

We plan for one to two snorkels per day, but an exact number of snorkeling sessions cannot be given due to the possibility of variable ice and weather conditions.

### Visibility

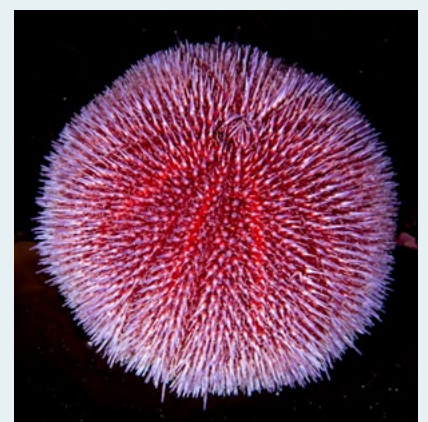
Visibility will be affected greatly depending on current and previous weather conditions, algal blooms, and glacial/river outwash; our expedition team will look for the best options for snorkeling options at sites with the best available visibility.

However, ice and weather conditions differ significantly, so accurate prediction is a challenge.

## SPECIAL NOTE: SAFETY FIRST

Snorkeling in the remote polar regions is no more dangerous than normal snorkeling if you follow one important rule: safety first.

Medical care is almost non-existent, and there is hardly any infrastructure in the polar regions. Although we have a doctor on board the vessel for first-aid assistance, we cannot accept risky ventures from any snorkelers.

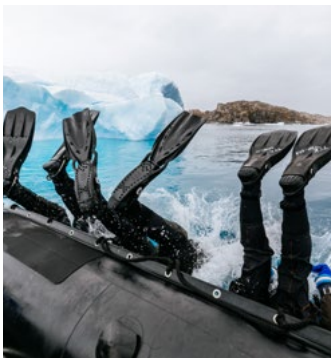




## SNORKEL EQUIPMENT

### Please bring the following equipment yourself:

- Drysuit
- Hood, Gloves, and Booties
- Snorkel Gear (Mask, snorkel, and fins)



### Dry suits

These are the only adequate protection in Arctic and Antarctic waters, which can be as cold as  $-1^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $30^{\circ}\text{F}$ ). The type of dry suit you use is not important so long as it fits you, is waterproof, and is comfortable to wear.

Neoprene dry suits have the benefit of good stretch and extra insulation. Shell suits provide no extra insulation but are lighter and dry quicker. They only keep you dry and require extra garments under the suit. If possible, bring a small dry suit repair kit.

### Dry suit accessories

If your dry suit does not have a hood, you will need to bring one. A 7mm neoprene hood with a face and neck seal is recommended.

Regular 7mm neoprene semi-dry gloves or mitts are relatively easy to use with any dry suit and may also be used. Three-finger mitts are warmer than five-finger gloves. You can also use special dry gloves that seal against rings on the arm of the dry suit.

Short surgical tubing or straws can be inserted under your wrist seals to allow air exchange between your suit and gloves, preventing glove squeeze and promoting warmth. This type of glove requires additional practice, as it can fall off if not used correctly.

### Face masks

We recommend a standard mask, but the type of mask you use is not critical. If you are experienced with full-face masks, you may use them. Commercial defogging agents work well for snorkeling.

### Insulating undergarments

The colder the water, the more (and thicker) layers of undergarments are required. We recommend you wear two or three layers, depending on your suit.

As the first layer, you should wear a set of polypropylene liners. This material helps absorb moisture from the body. Wear thick insulating material like fleece, synthetic pile, Thinsulate, or something similar to the second layer. As the final outer layer, we suggest a windproof shell.

The one-piece jumpsuit style is the most common and comfortable configuration of snorkel wear. Depending on your dry suit and the water temperature, it is available in various thicknesses.

### Post-snorkel clothing

It is essential to bring a warm hat and warm waterproof gloves to wear before, and especially after, your snorkels.



## YOUR VOYAGE IN ADDITION TO SNORKELING

Snorkeling in Antarctica and the Arctic is a fantastic adventure, but our usual land outings are also amazing.

**With your expedition leader's prior approval, you can participate in our thrilling shore excursions and Zodiac cruises instead of snorkeling. This combination characterizes the uniqueness of our voyages, which will give you the ultimate polar experience.**

Our Zodiacs can take you safely into beautiful fjords, among pack ice, and to shore sites. We usually organize one-morning excursion and one after lunch. The duration of excursions may vary, but they usually take three to four hours.

While on land, it is crucial to follow the instructions of our guides. It is not allowed to leave the group. For example, we must take the danger of polar bears seriously in the Arctic. Polar bears are naturally camouflaged, so they can show up anywhere and attack without warning. We also cannot touch, remove, or take anything else from the environment or its monuments. This includes plants, stones, feathers, or anything else.

Disturbing wildlife is also highly forbidden. Some birds nest on the ground, so be careful where you walk and do not approach nests. When a bird's nest is disturbed, it is extremely vulnerable to predators looking for eggs and chicks.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### What is the average visibility?

Visibility will be affected greatly depending on current and previous weather conditions, algal blooms, and glacial/river outwash; our expedition team will look for the best options for snorkeling options at sites with the best available visibility.

However, ice and weather conditions differ significantly, so accurate prediction is a challenge.

### What about currents and drift snorkels?

Currents are specifically mentioned at some sites where they may pose a problem. Currents could be present anywhere, at any time. We always check the current before snorkeling. We do not do drift snorkels. Drifting pack ice makes this too hazardous. If ice arrives while snorkelers are underwater, it can be hard to see them if they surface among them. We only snorkel near icebergs that are hard aground or floating in water clear of brash ice or pack ice.

### Do I need a full-face mask?

This is up to you and based on whether you are used to snorkeling with a full mask.

### What type of gloves should I bring?

Use a minimum of 7mm wetsuit gloves. Otherwise, we recommend dry suit gloves.

### Do I need a waterproof bag to carry my smaller items?

Bringing a waterproof bag to use while preparing your snorkel equipment on deck is good practice. In the Zodiac, it is best not to bring more than your necessary snorkel equipment.

### What is the water temperature in the polar regions?

Around freezing or slightly below.





## FINAL NOTES

- Snorkeling is an equipment-intensive activity, and ice snorkeling, in particular, requires extensive equipment due to the cold and remote locations. Snorkelers in cold water may have higher air consumption, expend more energy, and become fatigued more easily. Cold water also decreases your ability to perform complex manual tasks.
- The snorkel is a vital part of your safety equipment, and it is often used when snorkeling with seals and other wildlife.
- Do not bring any new equipment you have not tested in the water. The polar regions are not the place to test new equipment. Please make sure you have done at least four or five snorkels with your equipment. This will allow you to fine-tune your buoyancy and trim characteristics and take note of how much weight you need when snorkeling.
- Contact your airline about luggage restrictions and request a special allowance for your snorkel equipment before departure. All excess baggage is at your own expense.
- Snorkelers are expected to prepare their equipment before each snorkel session and take care of it afterward. Bring spare parts for your regulators and dry suit in case of leaks or damage.
- We do not have rentals on board. Please make sure you check out all your snorkel gear before leaving. Bins are available for storage.
- While packing snorkel gear, keep in mind that you will need to carry your own equipment in and out of the Zodiac for filling and logistical changes.
- Please get travel insurance! Participation in an expedition cruise is 100% at your own risk. In our travel documentation (specifically our personal information form for snorkeling), all passengers must sign a liability statement agreeing that Oceanwide Expeditions and snorkel staff are exempt from responsibility for personal injury and property damage, including loss of items. Oceanwide cannot accept any liability claims.

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