

# Polar Expeditions

Preparing for your next photographic adventure

# Preparing For Your Trip

- Plan well ahead ..... At least 6 to 12 months in advance.
- Flights: Schedule to arrive at port at least one day early.
- Route:
  - Antarctic Peninsula via Chile (Punta Arenas) or Argentina (Ushuaia)
  - East Antarctica (very remote, longer journey) via Christchurch NZ
- Significant savings can be made if willing to take a last minute deal but choice of trip and cabin will be limited.
- Insurance: Make sure you are covered for medical evacuation. Check all pre existing medical conditions are covered. Be sure your camera gear is covered too. Quotes can vary significantly, so shop around!

# Antarctic Tour Operators

- All major tour operators adhere to the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO) code of conduct.
- A maximum of 100 passengers plus staff are permitted to land at any one Antarctic location, at any time.
- Smaller ships, therefore, can land their entire guest complement on shore at the same time. Typical landing duration 3 to 4 hours.
- On larger cruise ships, time ashore will be significantly curtailed in order to provide all passengers the opportunity of a landing.
- Smaller ships can navigate shallower waters, providing more varied opportunities for landings.

# Photographic Symposi<sup>u</sup>ms

- Look for special photographic charters. Although slightly more expensive, they do provide specific advantages over other expedition cruises .....
- It is common for regular Antarctic cruises to have only one ship's photographer on board. Photographic symposi<sup>u</sup>ms, by comparison, will likely have a number of professional photographers on staff, providing advice, and running seminars throughout the trip.

# Photographic Gear

- Take 2 camera bodies: You'll be a long way from anywhere. If one body fails, you will at least have a plan B (It's quite common for at least one passenger to suffer camera loss on these trips).
- Tripod: A personal choice but not necessary unless shooting video.
- Batteries: Keep spares in your pockets or close to your body in order to preserve charge while ashore.
- Consider learning how to clean your sensor. There are no camera stores on Antarctica! Check out 'Visible Dust' cleaning kits .
- Weight: Will be an issue. Likely need to revise your equipment list a number of times. Duvet jackets with large pockets can help!

# A Few Thoughts on Lenses .....

- Zoom lenses are likely to prove far more useful than primes.
- Consider attaching a 24-70mm or 24-105mm lens to one body and a 70-200mm or 100-400mm lens to your other body.
- DO NOT be tempted to change lenses whilst onboard the zodiac .... Freak waves or salt water spray will potentially bring your photographic adventure to an abrupt ending.
- Likewise, DO NOT be tempted to change lenses whilst ashore. Antarctica and its sub Antarctic islands are well known for their high winds. Gusts can appear from nowhere, resulting in dust or grit being introduced to the camera, risking a dirty or damaged sensor!

# Photographing Wildlife

- **Body Position:** When photographing penguins, seals or birds on the ground, get down to their level. Kneel, crouch down or lie flat. Wildlife should feel less threatened and, in turn, reward you with better images.
- **Penguins:** A portrait shot is fine, but try to also capture interaction between the penguins or between penguins and other species.
- **Seals:** Tend to be fairly inactive whilst ashore. Best photographed when looking directly at you with those big, bulging eyes, or when yawning, exposing their teeth. Be careful not to get too close!

# Photographing Landscapes

- **Icebergs:** Come in all shapes and sizes ..... Some are truly massive. Try to capture a sense of proportion by including mountains, ships, or other features in the background.
- **Photographing from onboard zodiacs:** Depending on the speed of the craft, it can be difficult to maintain a level horizon. When composing your shot, zoom out a little so that, afterwards, you can rotate and crop your image accordingly.



# Suggested Camera Settings

- **On Land:**

- Landscape photography – aperture priority or manual
- Wildlife photography – shutter priority or manual, single point auto focus

- **Onboard Zodiacs:**

- Shutter priority or manual, minimum of 1/1000<sup>th</sup> second, auto ISO

- **Onboard Ship:**

- For flying birds & whales, zoom wide open, minimum 1/2500<sup>th</sup> sec, auto or manual ISO
- If looking to capture smaller birds e.g. petrels a 1.4x extender may prove useful
- Avoid use of tripods on board ship due to engine vibration

# Condensation Risks

- May be ashore for up to 4 hours at a time. Temperatures can drop suddenly. On return to a warm ship, if your gear is not protected, you run the risk of condensation forming, potentially shorting electronics, resulting in the loss of use of a camera or lens for the remainder of the trip ..... and an expensive repair when you get home!
- Highly recommend the use of a large Ziploc bag (check out Amazon). Wrap cameras and lenses in thick towels, seal in Ziploc bags, expelling surplus air before closing up and allow your equipment to SLOWLY return to normal temperature (may take a couple of hours).
- This advice is equally applicable to shooting on a cold winter day in Glencoe.

# Zodiac Etiquette

- Always remain seated until your boat comes to a complete stop and the 'driver' advises it is safe to stand.
- Always keep to your own side of the boat.
- Move slowly.
- Secure your sunglasses with a lanyard.
- Don't wear your backpack whilst on board the zodiac – if you fall overboard, it may prevent your life vest from inflating properly.
- Protect your camera from unexpected waves.
- **Take care to avoid hitting your neighbour's head with your zoom lens!**

# Respecting Wildlife

- Walk slowly ..... make no noise.
- Take care not to block penguin highways.
- All animals have 'Right of Way'.
- Avoid stressing wildlife. Keep a safe distance ..... minimum of 5m for penguins, 15m for seals, 50m for Giant Petrels.
- Never get between a fur seal Mum and her pup.
- If come too close, some species, particularly fur seals, elephant seals or leopard seals, may attack. In such circumstances, raise your arms (making yourself look bigger!) and slowly back away, mindful of other animals that may be in the area.
- Never use flash photography.

# Antarctic Summers

- Summer days are long and can be pleasant, temperatures sometimes reaching 3 - 5C. The weather can change quickly though. Dress in layers ..... thermal layer, mid layer and outer layer. Some expedition operators provide storm gear such as overtrousers, jackets, and insulated gumboots.
- Almost all landings on Antarctic shores are by Zodiac-type rigid inflatable boats. Storm gear and life vests (provided by operator) will be necessary, although they can be taken off once ashore. Consider purchasing a dry bag to protect your backpack from rogue waves (some operators supply these on a loan basis).

# A final word of advice .....

- The continent of Antarctica is a photographer's paradise .... But do remember .....
- Sometimes we can get so wrapped up in trying to capture that perfect image, that we forget to take some 'time out' to simply enjoy our surroundings. This can be especially true of Antarctica.
- So .... Remember to put the camera down occasionally and simply enjoy the wildlife, the landscapes and the majesty of Antarctica.
- **BON VOYAGE!!!**

# N.B. Legals .....

- The information provided in this presentation is intended as a general 'aide memoire' only.
- Individuals will have differing knowledge requirements, based on experience and trip specifics.
- It will be for the reader to ascertain personal information requirements. It is recommended you research the suitability of any potential trip thoroughly before booking.
- The author accepts no responsibility for any misadventure that may occur before, during or after your trip.