



OCEANWIDE
EXPEDITIONS

Hiking and Snowshoeing



General information for passengers

- For those that appreciate a more extensive hiking experience in the Polar Regions there are various possibilities on our expeditions
- Both in the Arctic and in Antarctica we offer dedicated hiking voyages
- Besides hiking voyages also snowshoe-hiking voyages are offered
- On all of our ships (except on our sailing-vessel Noorderlicht) there are options of 2 to 3 different guided walks per landing (easy to challenging)
- These walks vary in length, difficulty and distance and meters climbed: there are always walks that suit your need and ability!
- On hiking voyages to Antarctica we aim at about two hikes per day, each 2 – 3 hours long, up to a maximum of about 4 hours
- On hiking voyages to the Arctic we also offer several full day walks with packed-lunch
- We offer free rental of lightweight snowshoes on m/v Plancius hiking voyages in Antarctica and
- We offer free rental of rubber boots with good walking profile on all m/v Plancius voyages
- There is no extra charge for hiking: please see our dates for hiking and snowshoeing options

Oceanwide Expeditions has been a pioneer in expedition cruises in the Arctic and Antarctica for many years now. We feel at home on land as much as on the sea! As we carry several guides on board our motor vessels we can split up passengers into smaller groups for landings. In this way we can guarantee a “small group” travel experience with like-minded travel companions, also for the hikers.

In Antarctica we have been successfully offering a Weddell Sea hiking expedition and in Spitsbergen snowshoe expeditions with our sailing-vessel Noorderlicht for several years now. As more and more people are getting interested in active voyages, Oceanwide Expeditions is now offering more voyages with an extended hiking option. In the early season we are using snowshoes for walking on the deep and slushy snow. There is no difficulty in using snowshoes, everyone can do it. It is an exiting way to explore the Polar wilderness.

Please note

- Passengers can choose to skip walks and instead stay on board. Due to safety reasons passengers are not allowed to wander on land unaccompanied though
- Eating food/ snacks in Antarctica on shore is not allowed (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 (Antarctic Treaty/ IAATO regulations). A solution for this restriction can be a “pee-bottle”. These items have to be brought by passengers themselves.

Hiking and Snowshoeing Expeditions

- Early season snowshoe expedition on the two masted sailing vessel Noorderlicht in Spitsbergen
- Summer walking expedition around Spitsbergen in August on motor vessel Antarctic Dream
- Summer walking and snowshoeing in Antarctica on Professor Molchanov and m/v Plancius

High Arctic (Spitsbergen & Greenland)

For those who like to go out on real hikes in the Arctic our regular Arctic program has a lot to offer. The Arctic comprises a wide range of different landscapes; rugged, barren mountains, often covered with ice and snow, which exist besides miles and miles of gentle tundra. These varied landscapes make the Arctic suitable joy for hiking and other more active forms of sightseeing and wildlife watching.

In the late summer, when the tundra is dry and rivers are fordable, we offer a special hiking expedition with our motor vessel Antarctic Dream. During this expedition passengers are offered various hiking options. You can join in on shorter leisurely excursions, on medium demanding hikes (about 3 hours) or even on strenuous day hikes to explore more of the remote interior of Spitsbergen (6 to 8 hours hiking time). We will offer full day hikes to explore the rarely visited islands, which has been seen more reindeer and polar bears than people. We follow the excitement of pioneering and exploring rather than the well trodden paths. As we are crossing tundra and sometimes rivers, good rubber boots with good profile are essential.

On our regular voyages we also offer good hiking possibilities. For instance, the Spitsbergen expeditions with the sailing-vessel Noorderlicht have good hiking opportunities as the passengers on this vessel in general are quite active and hiking-minded. On the Noorderlicht expeditions at least one or two real day-hikes are offered on each trip. Please note that on the Noorderlicht there is no possibility to split up passengers in smaller groups as the ship carries only one guide because of the already small group size, the maximum number of passengers on the Noorderlicht is only 20.

Which season do we go?

From mid May until October the region of Spitsbergen and Greenland is accessible for wildlife cruises. The Arctic season for our motor-vessels starts in June in Spitsbergen and ends in September in Greenland and Iceland. On the Noorderlicht we operate in Spitsbergen from mid May to the end of October. After Spitsbergen the Noorderlicht continues in Lofoten in Norway from November until the beginning of December.

What are the weather conditions?

The weather is relatively mild from June until September. The temperatures vary then between about 5 and 10 °C (41°F and 50°F). Before June and after September the temperatures are a bit lower and can sometimes even be around freezing. In September we experience colourful dry tundra, however snowfall at this time of the year is also possible. During the summer months the sun remains above the horizon at midnight.

Antarctica

On our regular expeditions to Antarctica the hiking options are limited. In the southern hemisphere the topography of the landscape is very different compared to the north. The terrain is very rugged consisting of mainly steep cliffs and dangerously crevassed glaciers and it does not have any tundra. For those who do want to venture away from the Antarctic coastlines we offer a special hiking trip on the islands in the northern part of the Weddell Sea and on Deception Island. These Antarctic islands are more suitable for hiking as they are often less covered with ice and are less steep, in this way being more accessible than the north-western part of the Antarctic Peninsula. On our normal trips along the beautiful island of South Georgia often hikes are offered for the more active passengers. As South Georgia is sub-Antarctic it is less covered by ice and therefore it has more hiking possibilities. For instance, the last section of the famous Shackleton walk can be retraced.

Please Note: Hiking is subject to weather in Antarctica, much more than in the Arctic. Hiking is also limited by strict environmental regulations.

Which season and where do we go?

Our early season hiking voyages, from November until December, require snowshoes as deep snow is still covering the land. These voyages will be visiting the western coasts of the Antarctic Peninsula. Later in the Antarctic season, when the Weddell Sea is more accessible, our hiking trips are scheduled in February and March. By then most of the snow is gone which makes walking easier. At this time of the year the interior is also more accessible due to the fact that the bird chicks (e.g. penguins, skuas and petrels) have fledged and left their nests so the colonies are more open and less vulnerable to visitors. Hill slopes can be accessed without disturbing the wildlife.

What are the weather conditions?

Around the Antarctic Peninsula, temperatures during the Antarctic summer are generally above freezing (December - February). Temperatures range between -2 and 8 °C (28°F and 46°F). Together with a strong wind these low temperatures feel like real sub-zero temperatures. This is caused by the wind-chill factor. Warm and efficient clothing (and a flexible attitude) are the best means to overcome these sometimes harsh circumstances. Exploring remote and wild regions like Antarctica requires a sensible and flexible approach. Although there can be bright skies with sunshine the weather is unpredictable. Catabatic winds, caused by the icecaps and glaciers, can pick up suddenly and are a fierce opponent for polar travellers. This might lead to the cancellation of planned hikes as hiking excursions can and will only take place in safe weather conditions.



Clothing for the Arctic & Antarctica

As conditions can change rapidly, make sure you have clothing and equipment suitable for the worst weather.

Important personal clothing and gear to bring (required):

- rubber boots with a good profile for zodiac landings and walks
- ankle high, sturdy hiking boots for the walks and for wearing snowshoes
- when wearing hiking boots preferably also gaiters (gamaschen)
- 25 litre rucksack
- 1 litre water bottle
- "pee" bottle for Antarctica, e.g. wide opening Nalgene bottle. (there are special ones for ladies in outdoor shops available)
- thermal underwear
- fleece vest or jacket
- down jacket or spare fleece jacket
- breathable (eg. Gore-Tex®) jacket and trousers
- trekking trousers
- warm fleece hat
- turtle neck (neck gaitor)
- thermal under gloves (fleece finger gloves)
- warm gloves (mittens)
- thick hiking socks (plus spare socks)
- thin undersocks (against blisters)
- good sunglasses
- sun cream / sun block
- straps to tie snowshoes on backpack
- waterproof bag (for camera equipment), especially for the zodiac

Optional items

- hiking / walking poles
- binoculars
- thermos bottle (snowshoeing Arctic)

The following items will be provided by Oceanwide Expeditions

- insulated rubber boots with good profile for zodiac landings and walks (**on m/v Plancius**)
- MSR lightweight snowshoes (on m/v Plancius and s/v Noorderlicht)

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 (Hiking)

How long are the walks?

In the Arctic hikes vary between 2 to 3 hours morning and afternoon walks and 8 hours full day hikes. In Antarctica the situation is different as we are not allowed to eat nor leave any toilet waste behind (Antarctic Treaty/IAATO regulations). Therefore our time on land in Antarctica is limited. We plan to go ashore immediately after breakfast or lunch and we will be back for the next meal. That means that there is only about 3 to 4 hours maximum for the hikes. When possible one longer walk of about 6 hours will be made at Deception Island.

How difficult are the walks?

In the Arctic you need to be fit to be able to do the more difficult and demanding hikes. But there is always an option to join one of the less demanding hikes. Our guides can advise you which hikes will fit you.

In Antarctica the hikes are in general not too difficult for someone that has a good state of health. You need to be able to do a 4 to 5 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. There can be rocks, snow, mud or a frozen hard surface to walk on. We sometimes can only tell more about the difficulties of the hike when we are there at the spot, just before the landing. The weather can also make a walk easy or difficult.

How fast do we walk?

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

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

Yes, normally we split up into 2-3 smaller groups. Then there will be an easy and a more difficult option. We carry at least three guides on board of our motor ships so every group will have at least one guide. The more difficult option normally takes 2 guides on the walk. On our sailing-vessel Noorderlicht there is no option to split-up into groups as there is only one guide on board.

Are the hikes optional? Can I stay behind onshore?

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

Is it possible to take food on the hikes?

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

Is there a possibility to go to the toilet?

In the Arctic toilet visits are allowed. In Antarctica no toilet visits possible on land (Antarctic Treaty/IAATO regulations). If someone knows he/she has a frequent need for a toilet then this person has to take a bottle (e.g. a Nalgene bottle with a wide opening, sold in outdoor shops or other field toilet options) with him/her.

Please note that Oceanwide Expeditions is not providing any field toilet. One of the important things is not to drink too much before the walk. Then during the walk only drink when feeling thirsty.

If one brings hiking boots, does one then have to carry the rubber boots in one's pack? Or do those rubber boots (for the landings) stay with the inflatable and get returned at the end of the hike pick-up spot?

Normally rubber boots will stay on the landing/ pick-up beach together with the life-jackets. Sometimes they might be taken in the zodiac and delivered to the landing place. So the rubber boots do not have to be carried in the back-pack.





❄️ Snowshoe expedition with s/v Noorderlicht

In Spitsbergen Oceanwide Expeditions offers a special snowshoe walking expedition with our beautiful two-mast sailing vessel Noorderlicht. The Noorderlicht is a hundred years old two mast schooner that has been refitted for polar voyages. She carries only 20 passengers, 3 sailors, one cook and one guide. The atmosphere on board is friendly. Passengers are encouraged to help the crew with the sailing, no experience with sailing is necessary though.

The snowshoe expedition takes place in the end of May, when there are normally good snow conditions and when there is already 24 hours of daylight. The temperatures on Spitsbergen at this time of year are around or just above freezing, with often bright sunny days. And the coasts of Spitsbergen are not yet visited by many other people so this give us the opportunity to venture along the north-western shores of Spitsbergen and enjoy a pristine landscape and a already abundant wildlife.

Snowshoe walking is a very effective and easy way to explore the Spitsbergen wilderness. No special skills are required besides a good state of health. Unlike Langlaufen (cross-country skiing) no tracks in the snow are needed.

❄️ Frequently Asked Questions (Snowshoeing)

Where do we go on Spitsbergen?

The sailing range of this expedition is limited to the north-west coast of the Spitsbergen archipelago. As we want to make several longer hikes we do not want to spend much time travelling around with the ship. We like to spend as much time ashore as possible. We can also expect pack-ice around this time of year and pack-ice can further limit our sailing range.

Are the snowshoes already on board?

Yes, the snowshoes on the Noorderlicht are will be supplied by Oceanwide Expeditions (start Arctic 2010).

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 6 hour walk in fairly rugged terrain, with some up and downhill walking. No other specials skills are required. Still, when participants are not in good health and are not capable to do at least a 4 hour walk they can be disqualified for the excursions because of safety reasons and the other participants satisfaction.

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

We offer snowhiking excursions every full day of the expedition. Often we go out for morning, afternoon and/or evening hikes of about 3 to 4 hours. We also plan to do a couple of day hikes of about 6 hours (walking time). On these day hikes a pack lunch will be taken.

What kind of terrain can I expect?

On Spitsbergen there are virtually no hiking paths. Also almost everything will be covered by snow so we have to find our own route. Spitsbergen comprises a wide range of different landscapes; rugged, barren mountains and crevassed glaciers exist besides miles and miles of gentle 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 wildlife like bird colonies. Besides gentle walks on the wide tundra we will try and climb some accessible mountain peaks to enjoy the fantastic views on the snow covered mountains and frozen fjords. These climbs demand some stamina but are often optional.

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

On the Noorderlicht there is no possibility to split up passengers in smaller groups as the ship carries only one guide. The maximum number of passengers on the Noorderlicht is small though, only 20. So there are no options for easy or difficult walks.

Still we will try to provide walks for all (reasonably vital) passengers on board. The first snowshoe hikes that will be made are fairly easy, somewhere on a gentle tundra, to get used to the snowshoes. After several easy walks longer and more difficult hikes will be made in more rugged terrain. Later in the trip the day hikes are planned. Those that are not fit for the day hikes have to stay on board. Sometimes optional hikes will be offered, e.g. in the evening.



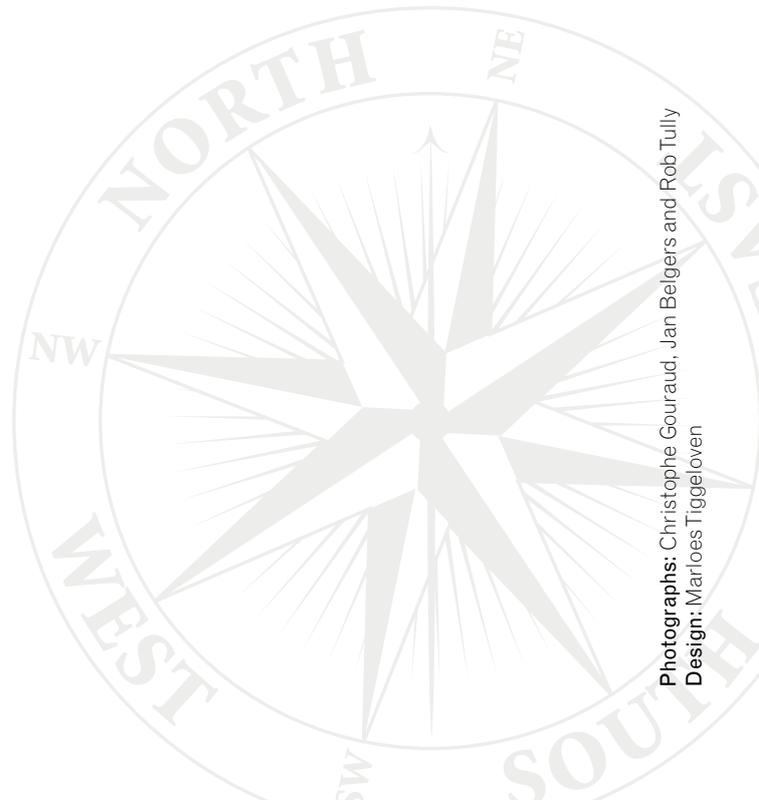
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