



Diving in Antarctica

Aurora Expeditions has been operating diving adventures in the polar region for more than 20 years. We were the first expedition cruise operator in the world to offer this ultimate polar adventure.

The experience of diving in the freezing waters of the Antarctic wilderness is one that will stay with you long after your trip. Being able to observe the icebergs and the areas' uniquely adapted wildlife, only seen by a select group of daring adventurers, is guaranteed to stir your soul and create memories to share and cherish.

'Getting out amongst it' is our philosophy, and that is exactly what we do. Weather permitting, you will dive while other expeditioners are doing their activities – kayaking, snorkelling or exploring ashore.

Aurora Expeditions is proud to have an excellent dive team to guide our dive adventures. Our guides have the experience, knowledge and skills to look after you on your diving adventure and are skilled at finding excellent dive sites, while taking into account the ever-changing weather and sea ice conditions.

How to Book

If you already hold the required experience and qualifications—or have enough time to gain them before your voyage—please complete and return the Polar Diving Activity Form. Our Diving Specialist will review your submission to assess your suitability and experience. They'll also follow up with any required paperwork and be available to answer any questions you may have.

Important note:

The main language used for our dive operation is English. For safety reasons, you must be proficient in English to participate in our scuba diving activity.



Required Experience

Our polar diving activity is not for beginners. You must be experienced, qualified and competent for the conditions the divers will face.

Minimum entry requirements

- PADI Advanced Open Water (or equivalent from another recognised agency)
- Drysuit qualified with a minimum of 30 drysuit dives
- In the previous 12 months before departure you must have completed at least 10 drysuit dives
- You must have recent experience of cold water (below 10 °C/50 °F)
- Divers must be able to kit and de-kit themselves with minimal assistance.

Upon completing an activity form, you will be contacted by our Diving Specialist, who will be able to answer any questions you may have, and you will be asked to send copies of your qualifications, logbook, evidence of insurance and to fill in a self-declaration medical.

Many travellers may not meet the required dive experience at the time of booking. Our diving specialist will stay in touch to help guide your progress and ensure you're on track to participate safely and confidently.

Booking allocation

Each diving place is for one person only. All divers are required to bring their own personal equipment.

Age requirements

You should be 14 years of age or more to participate in our polar scuba diving program.

Marine Life

Our dive sites range from shallow reefs to dramatic underwater walls and even small icebergs. Diving in polar regions offers a unique opportunity to explore mesmerising ice formations beneath the surface. In sheltered areas protected from iceberg scouring, you'll discover vibrant marine life—from forests of kelp to colourful nudibranchs, anemones, sea squirts, and fish. You may even be lucky enough to share the water with curious seals or gliding penguins.

Number of Dives

We plan to dive twice a day (except for sea days), but an exact number of dives cannot be given. It all depends on ice and weather conditions. Voyage itineraries are only a guideline, and safety is always the priority. Since this is an expedition to a remote part of the world, unpredictable weather conditions, availability of anchorages, wind conditions, and other factors beyond our control will always dictate when it's safe to dive. The 'check-out' dive is mandatory; however, after this, you can choose which dives to participate in, and when to go on the planned excursion with the rest of the passengers.



Diving Procedure

Diving in these remote polar areas is no more dangerous than normal scuba diving; however, it is more equipment and labour-intensive.

When you get onboard there will be a briefing from your dive guides. You'll spend some time setting up your kit and you'll participate in a mandatory 'check-out' dive as your first dive. The 'check-out' dive is an opportunity for you to adjust any weighting requirements, see how the procedure for diving from Zodiacs works and a chance to ensure that you are comfortable with your equipment. The 'check-out' dive will always be done in shallow water. Divers must be able to kit and de-kit themselves with minimal assistance. All divers must have enough experience to competently manage a dive themselves, including basic navigation (using a compass), using your dive computer and be able to perform rescue skills if required. Divers must be able to demonstrate basic diving competence, including pre-dive checks, buddy skills, and using an SMB (surface marker buoy).

There are only basic medical facilities on board, and no recompression chamber facilities are available. To minimise the risk of decompression illness, IAATO (International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators) stipulate a depth limit of 20m / 65 feet, which is mandatory and must be followed by all divers. Any deviation from this will not be tolerated by Aurora Expeditions.

Dives are conducted using the buddy system (pairs or groups of three). If you are not travelling with a dive-buddy, don't worry we will pair you up with other divers onboard.

Aurora Expeditions reserves the right to check dive computers after each dive. If the Lead Dive Guide deems any diver unsafe to continue, they may be removed from the program. This is a safety decision and is non-negotiable. Please note that no refund will be provided if a diver is suspended from the activity due to insufficient skills or experience.

Divers are required to follow all instructions from the Lead Dive Guide and Dive Team. Participation is voluntary, and all divers must fully understand and accept the inherent risks of scuba diving.

What to Bring

Please speak to your airline about their luggage restrictions, all excess baggage is at your own expense.

- Drysuit – it does not matter if it is a neoprene/ membrane/ trilaminate etc. as long as it is in good condition, keeps you dry, and you are competent in diving in it. A small repair kit might come in handy
- Hood – a 7 or 10mm hood is recommended for polar diving
- Gloves - for your hands, either wet mitts or dry gloves. Either system is perfectly acceptable, but you must be proficient in conducting all of your diving skills whilst wearing them.
- Thermals suitable to keep you warm in water as cold as -2 °C / 28.4 °F
- Regulators – two separate regulators suitable for cold water diving. You will need the following: two first stages, two second stages, a drysuit inflation hose, a BCD inflation hose, a submersible pressure gauge. The cylinders we use have a 'H' valve which is a dual outlet valve to reduce the risk of a free flow.
- Dive computer
- Compass
- Buoyancy Control Device (BCD) capable of lifting you in all of your gear and the extra lead required in cold waters
- Knife/ cutting implement
- Mask, snorkel, fins
- Torch
- Quick release weight system (weights will be provided onboard)
- Surface marker buoy, and a spool or reel (and be competent in its use)
- Surface audible signalling device, whistle or/and air horn
- Recommended: a mesh bag or similar to keep your fins/ hood/ gloves in



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Post dive clothing

It's important to remember to bring a warm hat and gloves to wear before and especially after the dive. You may also wish to bring a wind and waterproof spray jacket to keep the cold wind off your drysuit.

Things to be aware of – diving equipment.

Normal regulators will not function in sub-freezing water, hence the requirement for cold water-rated regulators. To avoid regulator malfunction, regulators must be cared for properly before, during and after diving. Avoid breathing from the regulator before submersion, except to briefly ensure it is functioning, but when doing so, exhale after removing the regulator from your mouth to avoid freezing the second stage with moisture from your exhaled breath.

If, during the dive, your primary regulator freezes up and causes a free flow, switch to your octopus and immediately abort the dive with your buddy.

Equipment provided onboard

We have two compressors on board that provide compressed air. Onboard, we have Faber 12 litre steel cylinders with a 'H' outlet for DIN regulators. We have DIN inserts if required, however, we strongly recommend you use DIN regulators. Lead weights are available in a range of sizes.

Group size

We have small group sizes of divers. We always have a minimum of two dive guides and a maximum of 6 divers per zodiac. While you are in the water, your guide will be in the Zodiac keeping an eye out for changing conditions. One of the dive guides will be available for search and rescue, if required.

Important note:

Please do not bring equipment that you are unfamiliar with and have not tested previously on a dive. The polar regions are not the place to test out new equipment. It is compulsory that you complete at least 5 dives with the kit that you plan on using in the polar regions. This will allow you to fine-tune your buoyancy, trim characteristics and make a note of how much weight you will need when diving in the polar regions.

For more information please contact your travel agent, or Aurora Expeditions on:

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