

Antarctica packing checklist

Everything worth bringing on an Antarctic expedition cruise — antarcticaunlocked.com/packing-list

0 of 56 items packed

Before you pack

- Dress in three layers: a moisture-wicking base, an insulating fleece or wool mid-layer, and a waterproof, windproof shell. Layers beat one bulky garment — the weather can flip from warm sun to biting wind within an hour.
- Wind and water, not raw cold, are the real enemies. Antarctic summer hovers around freezing — the goal is staying dry on Zodiac rides, not surviving -40° .
- Check what your operator provides before buying: most loan or gift the expedition parka and knee-high boots, sometimes water bottles and walking poles too.
- Fly-cruise voyages have strict luggage limits (around 20–25 kg including cabin baggage) that cannot be bought up — gear can be rented in Ushuaia or stored in Punta Arenas.
- Bring more prescription medication than the itinerary needs. Weather delays happen, and nothing can be restocked on the continent.

Documents & essentials

☐ Passport + a photocopy

Plus visas and immunisation records where required.

☐ Travel & medical insurance

Must include aero-medical evacuation cover for Antarctica; trip-cancellation cover is strongly recommended.

☐ Credit card

Visa, Mastercard and Amex are widely accepted on board.

☐ Some local currency

For port towns in Argentina or Chile.

Clothing — layers

☐ Thermal base-layer tops (2-3)

Thin merino or synthetic — avoid cotton, which holds sweat.

☐ Thermal base-layer bottoms (2-3)

Long underwear is the single most underestimated item.

☐ Fleece jacket or wool sweater

A zip fleece is easiest to add and shed as conditions swing.

☐ Warm mid-layer trousers

Track or cargo pants worn under waterproofs work well; jeans are restrictive.

☐ Long-sleeve tops (about 3)

☐ Casual onboard clothing

Ships are climate-controlled and informal — no dress code.

☐ Workout clothes

Most expedition ships have a gym.

☐ Swimsuit

For the polar plunge, pool, hot tub or sauna.

Outerwear

☐ Insulated waterproof parka — often provided on board

A high collar protects the neck on deck.

☐ Waterproof, windproof shell jacket

Thin enough to layer over fleece — wind protection matters more than raw warmth.

☐ Waterproof, windproof over-trousers

Required for Zodiac rides on most ships; a loose rain-pant cut beats fitted ski pants.

Footwear

☐ Insulated knee-high rubber boots — often provided on board

For wet landings.

☐ **Warm wool socks, several pairs**

Thin liners under thick pairs; keep a spare set in a ziplock in your daypack.

☐ **Waterproof walking shoes with grip**

For port towns and shore hikes.

☐ **Comfortable non-slip shoes for on board**

Closed-toed — sandals are unsafe on deck.

Hands, head & face

☐ **Thin liner gloves**

Keep fingers warm while working a camera or zips.

☐ **Waterproof insulated gloves or mitts**

Bring a spare pair — wet gloves ruin a landing.

☐ **Warm hat covering the ears**

Bring a spare; ear flaps help even with a hood.

☐ **Neck gaiter, buff or scarf**

Wind on Zodiac rides is the real enemy — cover exposed skin.

☐ **Polarised UV sunglasses + a spare**

Glare off snow and water is fierce; wraparounds with a retainer strap are best.

☐ **Ski goggles**

For Zodiac cruising on snowy or windy days.

☐ **Sun hat**

☐ **Hand and foot warmers**

Optional — good gloves usually suffice.

Photography & optics

☐ **Camera (+ lenses)**

A recent smartphone also does well — don't over-pack gear.

☐ **Spare batteries + chargers**

Cold drains batteries fast; recharge everything nightly.

☐ **Extra memory cards**

☐ **Waterproof camera bag or rain sleeve**

You will get splashed on Zodiac rides.

☐ **Waterproof phone case**

☐ **Lens cleaning kit**

☐ **Lightweight compact tripod**

Only if it folds small and weighs little.

☐ **Binoculars**

Essential for whale and bird spotting from deck.

Health & medication

☐ **Prescription medication, with surplus**

Enough to outlast delays — nothing can be restocked on the continent.

☐ **Seasickness tablets**

For the Drake Passage, just in case.

☐ **Basic painkillers**

Plus indigestion and headache remedies.

☐ **Sunscreen SPF 30+**

Thin ozone plus reflection off snow and water — burns happen in the cold.

☐ **SPF lip balm**

☐ **Moisturiser**

Polar air is very dry.

☐ **Spare prescription or reading glasses**

☐ **Standard toiletries**

Just what you'd pack for any long-haul trip.

Cabin & downtime

- ☐ **Earplugs**
Ship walls are not very soundproof.
- ☐ **Sleeping eye mask**
Polar summer means near-constant daylight.
- ☐ **Books, e-reader or puzzles**
There is plenty of downtime at sea.
- ☐ **Travel journal**

Bags & luggage

- ☐ **Soft duffel or soft-shell suitcase**
Compresses for easier cabin storage.
- ☐ **Small waterproof daypack**
Camera, water, spare gloves and layers on landings — keep it light.
- ☐ **Ziplock or dry bags**
For spare socks and electronics on wet Zodiac rides.
- ☐ **Small luggage lock**

Tech & misc

- ☐ **Plug adapters**
Often European two-pin on board — check your ship's guide.
- ☐ **Compact power strip**
Cabin outlets are scarce, camera batteries are many.
- ☐ **Reusable water bottle or thermos** — often provided on board
Refill stations on board.
- ☐ **Head torch**
For late-night wildlife watching on deck.
- ☐ **Collapsible walking pole** — often provided on board
For shore hikes.