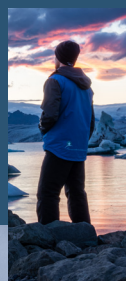


Go Wild

with your
Bucket List

Best Small-Ship Experiences 2024



 part of Aurora Expeditions



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THE ART OF ESCAPE

Live for those moments of discovery

For over three decades, AE Expeditions (part of Aurora Expeditions) has had the pleasure of sharing the world's wild secrets with adventurous travellers like you in Antarctica, the Arctic and Beyond.

Every time we set sail, we're reminded that our planet has so much to offer – new experiences, cool things to learn, but most importantly, why it's crucial to protect all the natural and cultural gems that are part of it.

Don't let life tame your bucket list, unleash your free spirit in the wildest places on Earth on new purpose-built, small-ship expeditions, pioneered for 33 years. This guide offers something for every season, including beholding the dazzling aurora borealis from the top deck, joining the fortunate few who have crossed the Antarctic Circle, or embarking on an ultimate Arctic adventure to Greenland, Svalbard and Iceland.

We hope you use this guide to stop dreaming and start planning your next meaningful adventure, whether it's one of our classic expeditions, new discovery voyages or immersive treks, or another once-in-a-lifetime experience on your bucket list. After all, it won't tick itself off. Discover the joy of some of the wildest and most pristine places on the planet, and travel with a positive impact.



The AE Expeditions difference

AE Expeditions is an award-winning Australian-owned expedition company with 33 years' experience taking adventurous expeditioners to the polar regions and beyond. We have a track record for pioneering discovery and adventure, and an ongoing commitment to sustainable travel and enrichment through many initiatives including our Citizen Science Program. We welcome back passengers who have sailed with us before and invite new expeditioners aboard to experience our unique style of travel and join our family.



**Positive Impact
Travel**



**Small Purpose-Built
New Ships**



**Education &
Enrichment**



**World-Leading
Activity Program**



**More Time
Off-Ship**



**Expert Guides
Ratio 1:7**

Bucket List Small-

Snap



1.

Antarctic Peninsula

Step foot on the 7th Continent and witness scores of penguins, wildlife & icebergs



2.

Costa Rica

Go from reef to rainforest in one of the most biodiverse places on Earth



3.

Svalbard

From polar bears to arctic foxes, discover the unbridled beauty and iconic wildlife of Svalbard



4.

Arctic

Go big then go home — tick off Greenland, Svalbard & Iceland off your bucket list in one life-changing expedition



5.

Antarctic Circle

Join the fortunate few who have crossed the Antarctic Circle

Ship Experiences

Shot



6.

Scotland

Roam on kayaks amongst towering
bird cliffs and ancient caves



7.

Antarctica

Embrace the isolation as you camp in
Antarctica and fall asleep to the sounds
of cracking ice



8.

Patagonia

Enjoy the best of both worlds:
trekking *and* cruising the wilds of
Patagonia



9.

Northern Lights

Behold the dazzling aurora
borealis from the top deck



10.

Iceland

Dare to marvel at thundering
waterfalls, lava fields and landscapes
shaped by volcanic activity

1. Step onto the 7th Continent and witness scores of penguins, wildlife and icebergs

Antarctica is a top bucket list destination for many intrepid explorers, and for good reason. A vast, captivating expanse — it is one of the last truly wild places on the planet.

That first step onto the famed White Continent reveals an epic wonderland teeming with life, undoubtedly one of the world's great wildlife-viewing destinations. It is home to millions

of seals, several species of whale, spectacular seabirds, and of course, more penguins than anywhere on the planet.

Witness the ancient giants — towering icebergs up to one million years old, or simply watch the changing light in this pristine environment. It is difficult to comprehend Antarctica's magnitude until one experiences it firsthand.

▶ SEE MORE:

Hear from our expert team on Antarctica.



Antarctic Peninsula

[View itineraries](#)



"I have told people that the overwhelming feeling while in the Antarctic was that it was MORE . . . more majestic, more pristine, more beautiful, more fragile, more everything. I would absolutely recommend your company to anyone else considering a polar expedition. The entire trip was so much more than I could have imagined."

— S Grieve

2. Go from reef to rainforest in one of the most biodiverse places on Earth

Costa Rica, meaning 'rich coast', is a nature lover's paradise that punches well above its weight – though it covers only 0.03 per cent of the Earth's surface, the lush Central American country contains a staggering six per cent of the world's biodiversity.

Around a quarter of Costa Rica's area comprises protected jungle, while its Pacific and Caribbean coastlines are brimming with marine wildlife and easily accessible pristine littoral rainforests filled with colourful plants, birds and animals such as monkeys and sloths.

Highlights include the remote Rio Claro Wildlife Refuge, one of the last

refuges of rainforest animals such as pumas, ocelot and tapirs; Manuel Antonio National Park where you could encounter sloths, toucans, armadillos, or Curú National Wildlife Refuge, home to capuchin, spider and howler monkeys and much more.

This tropical paradise is best explored along its coastlines by ship, allowing a variety of activities including hiking through tropical rainforests, witnessing spectacular underwater panoramas on snorkelling and scuba diving excursions, and kayaking or stand-up paddleboard amongst acrobatic dolphins.

[READ MORE:](#)

What to know before travelling to Costa Rica.



Costa Rica

[View itinerary](#)



"All destinations had 'wow' factor on many levels – excitement, scenic beauty, prolific wildlife, diverse ecosystems, some non-strenuous physical activity, cultural discovery and historical interest! To be a part of the inaugural Greg Mortimer Panama Canal crossing was momentous and awe-inspiring – such a feat of engineering and so special. Having such a small guest number was so intimate and meant very personalised interactions and activities."

— B Stephenson

3. From polar bears to arctic foxes, discover the unbridled beauty and iconic wildlife of Svalbard

Known as the wildlife capital of the Arctic, Svalbard is a Norwegian archipelago and one of the world's northernmost inhabited areas. The summer months bring near-endless daylight hours to the region, providing ample opportunities to explore as the surroundings become increasingly alive with wildlife and nature.

The icy realm is home to two Arctic giants that bring a thrill to all that have

the chance to see them – the majestic polar bear and the wallowing walrus. Look out for countless other creatures in this fairytale-like environment, including beluga whales, arctic fox, reindeer, ringed and bearded seals raising their pups on the pack ice, and bird species perched on cliffs in their thousands, such as guillemots, puffins and kittiwakes.

SEE MORE:

Hear from our expert team on why travel to Svalbard



Svalbard

[View itineraries](#)



"Exceeded expectations and our expectations were high given this was a top 'bucket list' destination. This trip rates alongside the best we have ever done (and we have done lots), partially due to the destination but also due to the way it was done by AE Expeditions. Would recommend AE Expeditions to anyone."

— D Thomas

4.

Go big then go home – tick off Greenland, Svalbard and Iceland off your bucket list in one life-changing expedition

The great sweep of the Arctic encompasses the northernmost latitudes on earth, offering unparalleled encounters with the natural world at its most rugged and wild. One of the world's last remaining largely untouched and unexplored wilderness regions, the Arctic contains eight unique countries, astonishing landscapes, fascinating traditional cultures, iconic wildlife and countless opportunities for awe-inspiring encounters with nature.

With so much to offer, it can be hard for travellers to know where to start. Our expert team recommend the 'Jewels of the Arctic' voyage; the ultimate 'greatest hits' adventure — combining mind-blowing landscapes, iceberg-filled fjords, the iconic wildlife and hot springs of Svalbard, cascading waterfalls, lava-strewn fields and the craggy volcanoes of Iceland.

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Tick off more destinations of your bucket list with Ultimate Adventures



Jewels of the Arctic

[View itinerary](#)



“What a thrill to witness Polar Bears off the coast of Svalbard, icebergs that stretch hundreds of metres into the sky falling away from East Greenland, walking amongst icebergs and watching puffins fly above black sand beaches in Iceland. It is rare that you get this much diversity on one expedition, but the Jewels of Arctic voyage provided a non-stop adventure from the moment I boarded and memories that I will never forget.”

— T Mayr

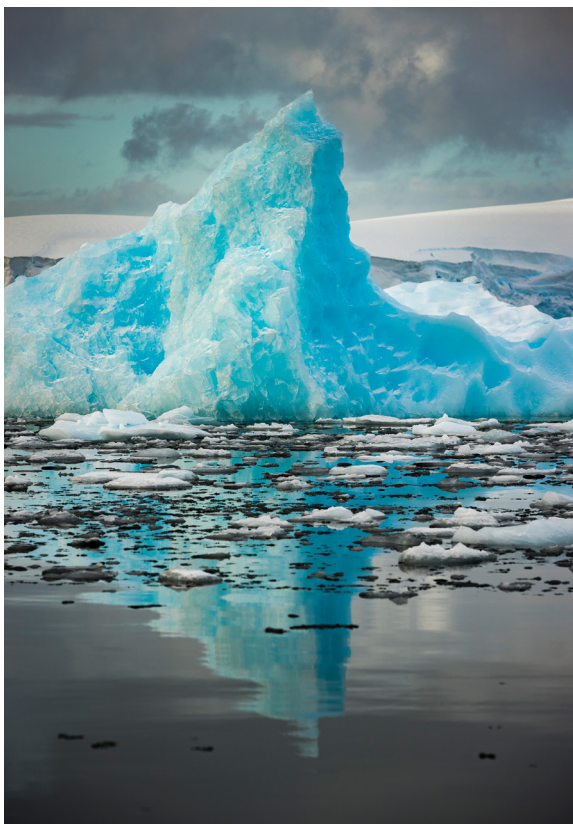
5. Join the fortunate few who have boldly crossed the Antarctic Circle

Few are lucky enough to tick the elusive 7th continent off their travel bucket list, and even fewer have the opportunity to cross the Antarctic Circle. A hot-ticket item for many an intrepid explorer, crossing this imaginary line at 66°33' south affords not only a celebratory toast out on the deck, but a glimpse of an untouched world that is colder and wilder, where nature reigns supreme.

An expedition across the Antarctic Circle requires truly embracing the spirit of adventure and the unknown of each day. You may navigate channels full of pack ice and breathtaking ice sculptures, watch for feeding whales, visit bustling penguin colonies, Zodiac cruise through mirror-like waters, and hike to remote vantage points to view this remote, pristine realm of wildlife, glaciers and unmatched natural beauty.

▶ SEE MORE:

Hear from our expert team on a typical day with AE Expeditions.



Antarctic Circle

[View itineraries](#)



"Antarctica is by far the premier wilderness destination on this planet. We absolutely loved everywhere we went ... A superlative experience. We are very widely travelled over many years but this was our best trip ever!"

— R Hughes

6.

Roam on kayaks amongst towering bird cliffs and ancient caves

Scotland's Isles are a haven for adventure, wild exploration and fascinating human history. These Isles comprise destinations including the windswept Hebrides, inhabited for over 8,000 years, the verdant Orkney Islands, where ancient Neolithic and Viking sites conjure images of civilisations long gone, and the 100 islands of the Shetlands, Britain's most northerly islands.

Kayaking past these rugged, sea-sculpted coastlines is an unforgettable experience. Watch for dolphins, whales, seals and thousands upon thousands of seabirds as you circumnavigate tiny islets or glide into narrow waterways that intertwine the islands.

While taking a break from the water, the land offers up golden beaches and jagged peaks to admire, ancient sea caves to explore, and charming villages, packed with friendly locals to meet.

[READ MORE:](#)

[The Scotland Birding guide](#)



Scotland

[View itineraries](#)



"I loved the landscape, the raw and rugged land, the history and the archaeological sites. Truly amazing! The 'time travel' through the centuries and the eyes of the amazing team, historian and wildlife specialists. We all felt like family at the end of the cruise."

— M Knispel

7. Embrace the isolation as you camp in Antarctica and fall asleep to the sounds of cracking ice

Camping on the ice in Antarctica is undoubtedly one of the world's wildest experiences, and one for the ultimate bragging rights. This experience offers the unique opportunity to roll out their sleeping mats and wriggle into their thermal sleeping bags for a night out on the ice; no camping experience – or even a tent – is necessary.

Once you've settled in, prepare to witness the beauty of the Antarctic

'night' sky, where the sun doesn't set during the summer months, and revel in the remarkable surroundings. Though this experience isn't known for the most restful nights' sleep, campers don't mind as they bask in the silence of the world's southernmost continent, punctuated by the occasional cracking of ice in the distance, or perhaps the waddling of penguins passing by.

[READ MORE:](#)

Camping in Antarctica



Spirit of Antarctica

[View itinerary](#)

Antarctic Peninsula In Depth

[View itinerary](#)



"What an incredible way to end the day... It is hard to describe the overwhelming feeling of being so far away from everything, cuddle up in a warm sleeping bag while falling asleep to the sounds of penguin calls and crackling glaciers. Definitely one of my most memorable experiences on the Antarctic Peninsula."

— J Robert

8.

Enjoy the best of both worlds: trekking *and* cruising the wilds of Patagonia

Wild and isolated, the vast region of Patagonia is shared by Argentina and Chile, stretching for thousands of kilometres along the Southern Andes. The destination is high on the bucket-list for outdoor enthusiasts and photography buffs for its turquoise lakes, jagged peaks, impressive glaciers, and unique wildlife, including guanacos, condors, pumas, whales, sea lions and even penguin rookeries.

A small-ship expedition to Patagonia allows travellers to experience the best of both worlds of this region's coastal and alpine environments. Highlights include sailing the legendary Beagle Channel, Zodiac-cruising through glacier-flanked fjords looking out for wildlife, and of course, filling the hiking cup with two days in the iconic Torres del Paine National Park marvelling at its majestic granite spires and snow-capped mountains.

[READ MORE:](#)

Captivating Patagonia
Animals



Patagonia & Chilean Fjords

[View itinerary](#)



"I climbed a path and from the top looked up-stream towards Chile. I could see the river, glinting and sliding through the bone-white cliffs with strips of emerald cultivation either side. . . There was no sound but the wind."

— B Chatwin

9. Behold the dazzling aurora borealis from the top deck

The captivating celestial phenomenon of the Aurora Borealis, or the Northern Lights, can be seen in the high-latitude regions of the Arctic in the late summer months of mid-August to mid-September. As the periods of darkness lengthen in this part of the world, the chance to witness this natural spectacle is a major drawcard for travellers to destinations like Iceland, Greenland and Norway. The visibility and intensity of this light display is influenced by solar activity and atmospheric conditions, so

it can be a matter of luck to choose the right destination and timing.

In addition to enabling you to experience more of the Arctic's breathtaking landscapes, taking a small-ship expedition that explores the coastlines of the Arctic Circle can be a good way to increase your chances to view this stunning lightshow, and experience the unforgettable sense of wonder that comes from seeing the vibrant green, pink and violet hues dance across the night sky.

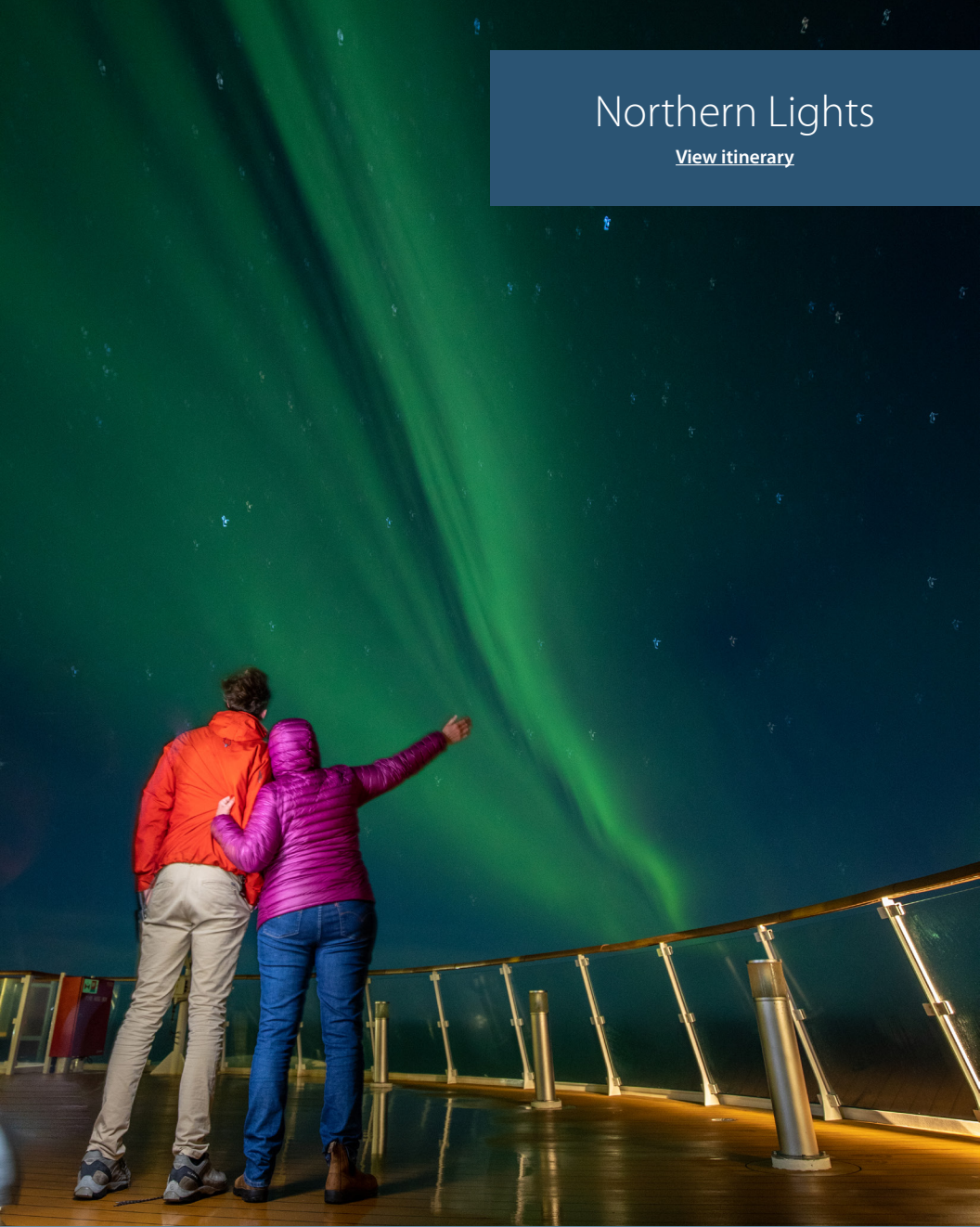
READ MORE:

Discover the Northern Lights



Northern Lights

[View itinerary](#)



"There were no promises made of seeing the northern lights, because nature doesn't work that way, but rumours of 'good conditions' were abuzz. So, our Expedition Leader asked if she could loudspeaker the news into our cabin if the lights appeared - everyone said yes! We were fast asleep when her voice woke us, but rugged up for the top deck. Seeing something as otherworldly as that changes you on a cellular level. Everyone faced in the same direction, just staring and quietly saying 'wow' over and over."

— K Hennessy

10. Dare to marvel at thundering waterfalls, lava fields and landscapes shaped by volcanic activity

Geologically, Iceland is one of the youngest countries on Earth, but arguably one of the most spectacular. An expedition here reveals a symphony of natural wonders: a place of thundering waterfalls, lava fields and landscapes shaped by thousands of years of volcanic activity.

From the erupting geysers of the Golden Circle and snow-capped peaks rising above glaciers, to bubbling hot springs and breathtaking fjords, unrivalled experiences can be found here for every kind of traveller.

Journeying through this magical realm with a small-ship as your base offers flexibility in wild environments, unparalleled access and a variety of perspectives from both land and sea.

Highlights could include a glacier hike at the incredible Snæfellsjökull Glacier, Zodiac cruising amongst the jaw-dropping Westfjords region, soaking your muscles in thermal baths, or watching millions of seabirds (including Atlantic Puffins) soaring above at Europe's largest bird cliff.

▶ SEE MORE:

Hear from our expert team on why travel to Iceland.



Iceland

[View itineraries](#)



“Our trek to the official Arctic Circle marker on Iceland’s tiny Grimsey Island began uneventfully. Midway through, I looked up from the trail to find myself surrounded by grazing sheep, hundreds of flying Atlantic puffins, dramatic cliffs, and the sparkling ocean – all in one frame-worthy moment. A few minutes later, three Icelandic horses appeared in the distance, their emo bangs flopping in the chilly wind. Iceland, I quickly realized, is always putting on a show.”

— **K Bolding**



"People always ask me why I want to keep doing these trips time and time again. It's simple – it's never the same. From the chemistry of the people you travel with to the impact of the weather and the ice, and those things that come along that nature just throws at you. The chance encounters you can have on an expedition are wonderful."

— Greg Mortimer, OAM
Founder (founded in 1991)







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