

What to Pack for Your Small-Ship Arctic Expedition Cruise

Let's face it: travelling to the Arctic is not an average holiday! There are some special considerations when it comes to packing to ensure you are fully prepared for your trip of a lifetime. Learn about all you need to bring on your next Arctic expedition!

By **Adventure Canada** | March 01, 2022

Related expeditions: [The Northwest Passage](#), [High Arctic Explorer](#), [Iceland to Greenland: In the Wake of the Vikings](#), and [Heart of the Arctic](#)



© Lee Narraway

The Essentials

Starting with the basics, there are some things you simply can't travel to the Arctic without:

- Your passport, travel insurance, [proof of vaccination](#), and any necessary visas or other travel documents
- Waterproof rain pants (These are required for all [Zodiac rides](#), including for embarkation and disembarkation of the ship.)
- A toque, beanie, or winter hat
- Waterproof gloves or mittens, ideally with texturized palms for gripping

Layer, Layer, Layer

Dressing in layers of increasing thickness is the most comfortable way to beat shifting Arctic temperatures, allowing you to easily add or remove extra warmth whether ashore or aboard. Avoid cotton and instead opt for quick-drying wool or synthetic materials. You'll want:

- One complete set of long underwear (top and bottoms)
- Lightweight or cropped pants and short-sleeved shirts
- Long-sleeved shirts, a light sweater, and warm pants
- A thick sweater, fleece, or puffer-style jacket
- Comfortable clothes to wear on board



© Dennis Minty

Warm and waterproof layers are essential for expedition travel.

On Your Feet

Expeditions are adventure travel! To keep up, be sure to bring:

- Comfortable, water-resistant hiking shoes or boots to wear on [shore excursions](#)
- Indoor shoes to wear on the ship
- Pairs of warm wool socks, plus slippers if you want to get really cozy
- Orthotic insoles or other footwear inserts, if desired

Technical Equipment

The following gadgets can prove very useful:

- A [camera kit](#) of your choice and comfort level
- Extra memory cards and batteries
- Charging cables for your devices
- European two-pronged plug adaptor(s) and a converter to charge and use electronic devices on the ship
- A USB key to back up your photos or share them with new friends
- A pair of [binoculars](#) for wildlife spotting
- Collapsible walking sticks for hiking



© Martin Lipman

Don't forget a waterproof bag for your camera kit on daily Zodiac rides!

Medications & Other Comforts

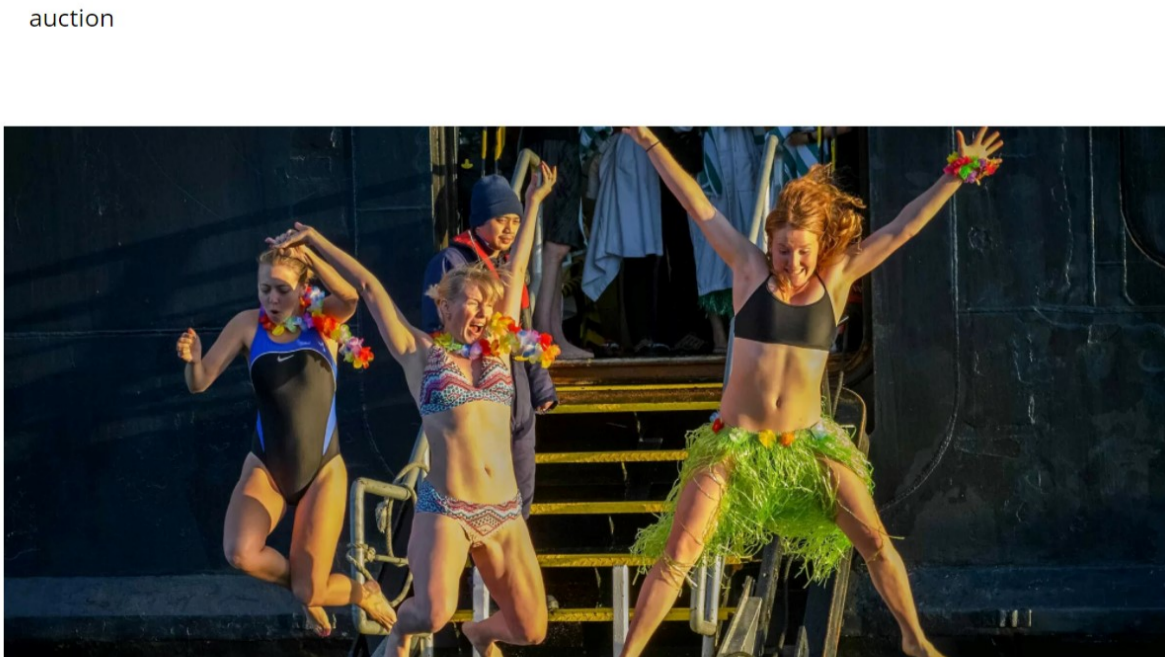
Always remember to pack prescription medications in your carry-on luggage and to bring copies of your prescriptions with you. Besides these necessities, it can be helpful to pack:

- Seasickness medication
- Over-the-counter medications for allergies, minor aches and pains, indigestion, or other common ailments
- Sunscreen, sunglasses, SPF lip balm, and a sun hat for bright days
- Insect repellent or a bug jacket

Fun Stuff

Depending on what you enjoy most, you could consider bringing the following:

- A bathing suit and flip-flop sandals for the ship's pool, hot tub, sauna, or [polar plunge](#)
- Cash currency for [purchasing souvenirs](#) ashore (Canadian dollars in Nunavut and Nunavik, Danish krone in Greenland)
- Exercise clothing to use in the ship's gym
- One nicer outfit to wear for any special occasions, such as the captain's welcome or fundraising auction



© Scott Forsyth

You won't want to miss the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for a polar dip just because you forgot to pack a bathing suit!

Extras You May Not Have Thought Of

If you're a light sleeper, it may be worth bringing along earplugs, a sleeping mask to block out the Arctic's late-night sunlight, or medical sleeping aides to help with any jet lag.

If you're considering purchasing a new daypack, think about opting for a waterproof backpack to save you the hassle of fiddling with a rain cover or dry bags while travelling in the Zodiacs.

Some Things You Could Skip

If you begin packing and realize you need to lighten your load, you could ditch the following from your suitcase:

- A waterproof shell jacket (We'll provide you with an expedition jacket, which is yours to keep after the voyage!)
- Tall waterproof boots to wear for Zodiac wet landings (We will equip you with a pair when you arrive on board.)
- Books (We have lots to choose from in our ship's library.)
- A bulky camera kit, if photography is not a passion of yours (You can borrow cameras and lenses from our on-board Nikon trial program, and the professional photographer on your expedition will provide all gear and a digital photo album at the end of the trip.)
- An alarm clock (You'll get a cheery wake-up call from the Expedition Leader over the PA system each morning.)
- A hair dryer or throbbe (These are provided for you in your cabins.)