



PHOTO WORKSHOP

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR PASSENGERS

PROTECT YOUR GEAR

During your polar voyage, you and your camera will be exposed to a variety of challenging conditions. Be careful with your equipment and make sure it's protected from sea spray when in the Zodiacs, on a beach, or on the deck of the vessel. Saltwater and electronics are not a good mix!

RISK OF CONDENSATION

The temperature outside is much lower than inside the ship. When coming back to the ship from an excursion, your equipment will be cold, which means condensation will easily build up on your lenses and in your camera body. It can take time before you'll be able to safely use the equipment again, but you can partially avoid this by sealing your gear in a plastic bag before bringing it back on board. We recommend using silica gel bags or other drying agents in your camera bag to avoid the build-up of moisture and to air out your equipment when it's back to room temperature.

BATTERIES & MEMORY CARDS

Our voyages tend to move from one incredibly picturesque location to another. For this reason, you will probably take far more photographs than you expect, so be sure to pack plenty of memory cards (or perhaps an external hard disc) for additional storage space as well as an extra set of batteries. And because the charge on batteries usually drops when cold, carrying a spare battery in a warm pocket will ensure that you do not miss that perfect polar shot.



TRIPODS

Bring a tripod with a ball head or tilting panorama head that fits your equipment. If you have lightweight equipment, you can use a lightweight tripod, but heavier equipment with large lenses requires a larger and more stable tripod. Having the appropriate tripod will ensure stable conditions when in low light or when shooting macro photography or long-time exposures.



SUNRISE & SUNSET

Because it's not always sunny in the polar regions, it is smart to take advantage of the light at sunrise and sunset. Ask the bridge when the sun goes up and down, and be on deck to make the most of it. The light is softer and the shadows longer during these hours, adding interesting dynamics to your photograph.



CORRECT EXPOSURE IN WHITE SURROUNDINGS

It can be very hard to ensure that what's white in reality appears white in your photographs, and it is even harder to get white truly white and black truly black at the same time. This can make photographing a penguin in bright sunlight very problematic!

But if you have a point-and-shoot camera or entry-level DSLR, there will most likely be a winter / snow exposure setting. Use it and you'll get a much better result.

Larger DSLR cameras need more attention for the optimal result. Prior to your trip, get familiar with the exposure lock function as well as the camera's settings for spot-measuring the light. If you measure the light by default settings on a white iceberg, the light meter will automatically try to adjust the shutter speed and aperture to create a neutral tone in your photographs. Neutral is not actually white but rather grey-ish. In order to compensate and make your camera's light meter system capture white as white, you must spot meter on the whitest surface in your frame, lock the exposure, and then overexpose (e.g. E.V +1 as guideline). It sounds counterintuitive, but if done correctly the rest of the colors will fall into place and give the optimal exposed photograph.



Test your equipment prior to and during your voyage, exploring its features. You can always ask the Oceanwide photo guide to help you. Also, don't forget to regularly reset your settings to their defaults during the day, or else you'll have a lot of overexposed pictures. Frequently review your pictures on the camera to make sure this doesn't happen.



PORTRAIT OR LANDSCAPE FORMAT

The horizontal landscape format is most similar to how humans see the world and is considered the “normal” format. Landscape format is ideal for photographing landscapes, as it reflects expansion and depth well. The vertical portrait format, however, conflicts with how we normally see the world, though it offers a more dynamic and close-up approach. Try to vary your photographs of wildlife with both formats to achieve the best results.



THE RULE OF THIRDS

Placing your primary subject in the center of the photograph sometimes makes for a less interesting picture. To avoid this, imagine splitting up your camera frame into thirds divided by straight lines. Put your subject on either of those lines and you will have a much more appealing image. Try to avoid splitting the image into halves by placing a horizon in the middle. Rather, place it near the lower or upper third of the frame, emphasizing the expanse of the background or foreground. Also, take care that your focus is correct when using the rule of thirds.



SIDE LIGHTING AND BACKLIGHTING

Highlighting a light source coming from the side can create a sense of depth, enlivening what might otherwise be a flat image. Think about the effect the shadows provide when trying to apply depth to your photograph. In a similar way, backlighting can create some fantastic effects, though this requires careful light metering, depending on the desired result.



EYE-LEVEL PHOTOGRAPHY

When photographing wildlife, shoot at eye level and not downward. Eye-to-eye perspective imparts a much more appealing and natural photograph.



DETAILED SHOTS

Try not to only shoot very wide or close up shots, but take a moment to examine the scene for other perspectives. Use a moderate telephoto lens for this purpose.

SWITCH OFF THE FLASH!

Flash photography is not often a good idea when photographing wildlife, as it's hard to control the light correctly and it may disturb the animal(s) you're photographing. Smaller point-and-shoot cameras automatically switch on the flash when in low light, but the flash will not reach very far and is rendered useless for distances of more than a few meters. All that flash creates, then, is annoyance among your fellow travelers. Please make sure your flash is off, and use a tripod and night mode / long-time exposure instead.

Images by Troels Jacobsen

Oceanwide Expeditions | Head Office

Visserijkade 5 • 4382 ZA Vlissingen • The Netherlands
T +31 (0) 118 410 410 F +31 (0) 118 410 417
E info@oceanwide-expeditions.com

Oceanwide Expeditions | USA & Canada Office

14950 Heathrow Forest Parkway, Suite 560 • Houston, TX 77032 • USA
T +1 800 453 7245 or +1 281 741 2372 F +1 281 749 8220
E usa@oceanwide-expeditions.com



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