

QUARK EXPEDITIONS & THE POLAR ENVIRONMENT

THE POLAR REGIONS: BELLWETHERS FOR THE HEALTH OF THE PLANET

The Arctic and Antarctic environments are the most fragile on the planet and highly susceptible to damage from global climate change and human activities. In the Arctic, glaciers and sea ice are melting at an increasing rate, contributing to rising sea levels that threaten the habitat of ice-dependent polar bears and seals, while in Antarctica, surface waters have warmed, precipitation has increased, and in some parts of the continent there has been a significant retreat and collapse of ice shelves.

As the leading operator of polar expeditions since 1991, Quark Expeditions has a profound commitment to environmentally responsible tourism in the pristine areas in which we operate. We do everything we can to lighten our ecological footprint by reducing and minimizing our carbon emissions and protecting the biological diversity and natural resources of the polar regions.

[Educating Our Travelers](#)

Not only do we have a responsibility to travel in an environmentally responsible manner, we believe it is our obligation to inform and educate our travelers about the pertinent issues. And the success of our efforts depends on our travelers enthusiastically embracing the visitor guidelines we carefully adhere to. Before you even step foot on one of our ships, you'll be well acquainted with the environmental issues regarding your destination. Shortly after you sign up, we send you vital information that includes visitor guidelines and relevant environmental topics. You'll find other documents in your cabin upon arrival, and throughout the voyage our Expedition Team will brief and remind you about aspects of the guidelines





PHOTO CREDIT: TOM ARBAN

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We wash all boots before and after going ashore to ensure there are no soil or seed contaminants.

on every single excursion, whether it's a Zodiac cruise or kayak paddle among floating bits of ice or shore visits to explore penguin rookeries or examine delicate tundra plants.

We find our guests are conscious consumers and savvy about environmental issues. "Our travelers want to do the right thing and we show them how to do that," says Expedition Leader Bill Davis. "They leave knowing they have done everything in their power to have a minimum impact on the area. Their experience is enhanced in knowing that there's a reason we don't let them take a rock home or climb up to a bird colony. We show them how to respect the environment and leave it so everyone can enjoy it."

[It's Not Easy Being Green, But It's Worth It](#)

On all our expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctic, we follow strict guidelines drawn up by the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO) and the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO). These guidelines, designed to ensure the continued environmental protection of the polar regions, spell out strict codes of conduct while visiting these

unspoiled areas. We adhere to IAATO's guidelines when traveling in the Antarctic, while Arctic travel is overseen by various government bodies whose rules and regulations are, in many instances, adopted from original guidelines set up by AECO. (Travel guidelines for the Arctic are even more complex and stringent because of the additional concerns of indigenous Arctic cultures and sensitive archaeological sites.)

We file documents in advance with the U.S. Dept. of State that specify our planned itineraries and activities to ensure they are within the environmental protocol. Our Initial Environmental Evaluations for the Antarctic – two comprehensive documents of more than 100 pages each, outlining information on our ships, captains, crews, expedition staff, required permits, all planned activities – are updated annually and demonstrate that everything we plan for has less than a minor transitory impact. We also file post-visit reports detailing times of visits, locations, changes in sites, etc. for both Antarctica and the Arctic.

[Our Expedition Leaders: Charged With Responsibility](#)

Quark employs only very experienced Expedition Leaders with a proven track record, who know how to conduct landings in a careful and conscientious manner, and will remain vigilant in their efforts to see that guests do not impact the environment, flora, or fauna.

Before the start of each season, our Expedition Leaders study the pre-season checklist – more than 80 documents and hundreds and hundreds of pages. They review Quark’s internal expedition management and standard operating procedures manuals. Skill-training is on-going throughout the travel season as are regular meetings where supplementary resource materials are distributed, including National Science Foundation (NSF) articles and environmental assessment and evaluation reports.

The Nitty-Gritty: Fuel & Waste Management at Sea

Like all companies operating sea-going vessels, Quark Expeditions must adhere to the MARPOL Convention (The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships), which includes regulations meant to prevent and minimize pollution from ships. (MARPOL is a contraction of the term “marine pollution.”)

With the exception of our two icebreakers our fleet uses, whenever possible, marine gas oil (MGO), an expensive, highly refined fuel that would disperse fairly quickly in the unlikely event of a spill (the ships are ice strengthened, so the possibility of this happening is greatly reduced).

We separate all waste on board – metals, plastics, glass, batteries, even poultry products (to reduce the risk of introducing bird flu to the indigenous avian populations). Paper products, cardboard packaging, and the like are incinerated. We wash all boots before and after going ashore to ensure there are no soil or seed contaminants, and also vacuum all parkas, backpacks, and anything else going ashore (even camera tripods and walking sticks!).

In our corporate offices, we use stationery made from 100% post consumer fiber, and print marketing materials on paper that conforms to Forest Stewardship Council guidelines.

Our Environmental Commitment in the Office

In our corporate offices, we use stationery made from 100% post consumer fiber, and print marketing materials on paper that conforms to Forest Stewardship Council guidelines. In addition, we recycle waste paper, cans and bottles. To reduce paper consumption, we use e-mail whenever possible to communicate with our suppliers, travelers and colleagues.

How We All Can Make a Difference

There are many effective environmental organizations we support, including the “Save the Albatross” program, which works toward alleviating the critical impact of long-line fishing on the wandering albatross and other albatross and seabird species. In 2007, we raised a quarter of a million dollars through special auctions on board two of our ships! We continue to support the UK and New Zealand Heritage Trusts, which restore and maintain historic huts in Antarctica. We have provided in-kind and financial support to Falklands Conservation and the South Georgia Heritage Trust.



PHOTO CREDIT: TOM ARBAN

Quark also logistically and financially supports ongoing research, including a University of Alberta polar bear radio collar study, which tracks the bears' range changes, breeding habits, and interactions with humans. Expedition Team members also help by counting whales and orcas, observing population changes in penguin rookeries, and assisting with gathering other field data that aids researchers.

Quark's Polar Ambassador Program

One of the most significant actions you can take is to become an advocate and ambassador for the polar regions. Our Polar Ambassador Program, an initiative exclusive to Quark and launched on Earth Day, April 22, 2008, suggests ten simple things you can do to make a difference: donate to organizations that lobby and work to protect wildlife and historic sites; reduce your personal environmental impact; advocate for environmentally friendly practices; educate your friends and family; inform your government representative; volunteer; support companies with "green" programs; question reports that deny global warming; fund raise in support of your favorite environmental advocacy group; and share this information with others. For more information, go to www.quarkexpeditions.com/polar-ambassador.

The Future – Our Goal to do Even Better

We constantly fine-tune our efforts to remain sensitive to environmental factors affecting the polar regions. Their pristine nature is too precious and valuable to be casual about safeguarding the integrity of these regions. We are committed to adopting new and cleaner technologies as they become available, upgrading equipment and strengthening our standard operating procedures to mitigate the impact of our expeditions, so that our travelers can explore areas that are difficult to reach, and – most importantly – so that they explore with a real respect for the areas we visit. We know that in introducing these special worlds to our travelers we instill in them the same passion we possess for the polar regions.

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