



# Antarctica

The following information must be viewed as a guide only. It is not intended, nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice.

Specific recommendations on vaccinations, antimalarial medications and targeted travel health advice is always provided on an individual basis taking into account:

- the personal health of the traveller including past medical and vaccination history;
- intended activities;
- precise itinerary;
- style of travel;
- type of accommodation;
- time of year;
- altitude;
- length of stay.

We strongly recommend travellers seek an appointment with a doctor trained in travel health prior to departure.

Medical and nursing staff at Travel Doctor-TMVC are trained in international public health issues with a focus on immunisations and preventive medicine. Many have travelled extensively and a number have worked in less developed areas of the world for extended periods. Travellers should undergo individual risk assessments whether they are short term holiday makers, business people or the long term expatriate worker. The Travel Doctor-TMVC has clinics Australia wide. In Australia the local centre may be contacted on 1300 658 844, or by visiting [www.traveldoctor.com.au](http://www.traveldoctor.com.au). It is recommended that you visit a travel health professional 6-8 weeks prior to departure. However, if that time frame is not possible, remember – “It’s never too late to vaccinate”.

## Healthy Travelling in Antarctica

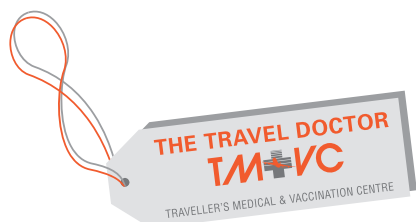
Antarctica is developing as an emerging tourist destination. The continent is reached by air and sea by a number of tourist operators. Most cruise lines allow for the landing on shore, conditions permitting, and some of the flights to the continent feature excursions to the South Pole. The relative isolation of the destination poses unique challenges since medical evacuation may not be feasible. Regular Qantas 747 flights over Antarctica are also available for those wishing a less challenging adventure.

Pre-travel preparation will help protect your health while you are away. To assist you in recognising and understanding some of the major travel health risks you may face while holidaying in Antarctica, the Travel Doctor-TMVC has prepared a summary of some of these issues in the following pages. **Table 1** provides a brief description of some of the major travel health issues and vaccinations that should be considered for travel to Antarctica.

Currency of your basic immunisations such as Tetanus and Diphtheria should be checked and others like Hepatitis A and Typhoid considered according to where and how you enter or leave Antarctica. Influenza vaccine is essential, and persons with chronic respiratory or systemic illness should consider pneumococcal vaccine.

Being prepared to manage diarrhoea and respiratory infections is important. Sunburn is severe, and motion sickness very common.

We hope you find this information useful in preparing for your trip. Remember it is advisable to consult a travel health specialist prior to departure.





**Table 1. Major Travel Health Issues & Considerations for Antarctica**

Solar damage	As a result of the depleted ozone layer over Antarctica, travellers are at increased risk of solar skin and eye damage. Protective clothing and eyewear are essential.
Hypothermia	Needless to say the extreme temperatures demand respect.
Altitude sickness	The South Pole is at 2800m elevation, but cold thin air lowers the barometric pressure even further, making the development of acute mountain sickness a possibility. The low oxygen saturations would make travel to the South Pole difficult for those travellers with pre-existing lung disease.
Physical fitness	The Drake Strait between Cape Horn and Antarctica has notoriously treacherous sea conditions, making the crossing perilous for those lacking in physical stamina. Most tourists will be reliant on sea-sickness medication for the rough conditions. Cabin doors should remain closed in the worse conditions since sudden shifting of the vessel can lead to the forceful striking of heavy doors against soft body parts.
Pre-existing medical conditions	The isolation of the destination makes management of unstable medical conditions problematic. Evacuation to safety may be impossible in required time frames.
Routine vaccinations	It is suggested that routine vaccinations such as Tetanus, Diphtheria, Whooping Cough, Influenza, Measles, Mumps and Rubella be undertaken to reduce the likelihood of these infections being acquired en-route.
Common medical conditions	It is advised to carry a comprehensive medical kit for the self treatment of common traveller's ailments such as respiratory or gastric infections and sea sickness. Most Antarctic Cruises will have a physician on board.

A salutary lesson about health issues in Antarctica can be found in the following link:-  
[http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/175\\_12\\_171201/lamberth/lamberth.html](http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/175_12_171201/lamberth/lamberth.html)

**Additional fact sheets** can be found at <http://www.traveldoctor.com.au>. These include fact sheets about:

- eating and drinking safely;
- travellers' medical kits.



**Remember to check the DFAT 'Smartraveller' website [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au) prior to departure**



...for a safe and healthy journey

Travel Health Fact Sheet **Antarctica**

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Clinics Australia Wide. For your nearest clinic call **1300 658 844** or visit [www.traveldoctor.com.au](http://www.traveldoctor.com.au)



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