

# ASK THE agent

Expedition cruise specialists give their top tips on selling this lucrative sector. **Laura French** reports



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## 1

### “HIGHLIGHT SUSTAINABILITY”

As managing director of expedition specialist Wildfoot Travel, which sells cruises in the Arctic, Antarctica, Africa, Latin America and Asia, Simon has extensive experience working on the polar regions and beyond. He has kayaked through remote, icy regions and is especially fascinated by the Falklands and the Antarctic peninsula.



**Wildfoot Travel**  
Simon Rowland, managing director

### “ HE SAYS

When we first hear from a potential expedition customer, they are sometimes overwhelmed with too much information. Initial questions – about the size of the vessel, the expertise on board, how much opportunity there will be to get close to the scenery and wildlife, and the best time of year to go – can always be anticipated.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience for most passengers, so it has to be right in every way. I'd recommend asking questions around these concerns to guide the customer.

Learn and read as much as you can to become an expert. You will have customers in your database who want to visit the polar regions and beyond, so seek them out and be ready for them. Spread the word so people know you're offering expedition adventures.

It's also important to highlight the sustainability factor when you're selling these cruises – we're experiencing great demand for well-designed, environmentally-friendly vessels.

When it comes to destinations, Svalbard and the shorter Antarctica departures are selling well, but we're also finding that Iceland, Greenland and Canada are starting to appeal because of the Inuit cultural opportunities, polar history and wildlife viewing.

## 2

### “KNOW THE SEASONS”

With a passion for mountaineering and exploration, James has travelled extensively in the polar regions of Svalbard, Antarctica and Greenland. He has worked in luxury travel for more than 10 years and now uses his expertise to sell expedition cruises at specialist agency Polar Routes.



**Polar Routes**  
James Turner, polar expedition team leader

### “ HE SAYS

If you're selling the polar regions, ensure you know the seasons. For the Arctic, expeditions usually take place from May to September; in Antarctica, late October to March.

In terms of destination, I'd recommend Svalbard as a first expedition cruise. This archipelago of islands offers classic Arctic scenery and is known as the realm of the polar bear, but you can also spot whales, seals, Arctic foxes, Svalbard reindeer and plenty of birds.

For a second or third trip I'd suggest east Greenland – the sheer scale of the mountains, glaciers and icebergs is mesmerising. After that Antarctica has to be on the list. I'd recommend Aurora Expeditions' Antarctica Complete itinerary. It goes further south than most other voyages and incorporates the Falklands and South Georgia which, for nature enthusiasts, has to be the most incredible destination on Earth.

My top tip would be to highlight that expedition itineraries are subject to the local weather, wildlife and sea or ice conditions. It's also worth noting that expedition cruises are all about being immersed in the great outdoors. Mother Nature provides the entertainment. And what a show it is!

## 3

### “GET CLUED UP ON PRODUCT”

David has been in the travel industry for more than 10 years and is responsible for co-ordinating the marketing strategy at Exclusive Expeditions, a specialist cruise agency based in West Sussex, which sells tailor-made experiences in remote regions – from the South Pacific to Australia, Asia and Antarctica.



**Exclusive Expeditions**  
David Smith, marketing director

### “ HE SAYS

It's vital to really understand clients' expectations, and to be clued up on the destination and the nuances of the different products available.

We've had a few clients worry that they might not be fit enough, especially when it comes to getting on and off the Zodiacs. But the operators can advise on the level of fitness required for an excursion and there are always alternative options.

I think there are still a few who believe expedition experiences are only available on old naval vessels – which certainly isn't the case! Thanks to the increase in new ships, the options are nearly limitless, and many of the luxury cruise operators have embraced expedition, offering a six-star onboard experience.

Destination-wise, the Arctic and Antarctica are the most popular and you can get some good deals; G Adventures and Hurtigruten both offer great value. The Galapagos Islands have risen in prominence, as has river cruising in southeast Asia. For the Galapagos, Silversea Expeditions' *Silver Origin* looks to offer incredible luxury. For Australia, Coral Expeditions would be my first choice. If clients want something even more remote, suggest the Marquesas Islands in French Polynesia – Aranui Cruises' cargo vessel is the most authentic way to explore this exotic region.