

CHAPTER 5: Travel Guidelines



A U.S. Air Force C-17 aircraft lands near McMurdo Station. Photo by Jack Green.

This chapter gives travel advice for the foreign countries through which you might travel and explains how to obtain your ECW clothing and how to transport your baggage. The chapter also describes your arrival in Antarctica and your return from the continent.

TRAVEL ADVICE

Customs and Mail Warning

Like any traveler, USAP participants must obey foreign laws. These laws can differ from those of the U.S., and penalties for violations can be severe. Persons found in violation of these laws are subject to prosecution in local courts. Association with the USAP affords neither preferential treatment nor immunity from prosecution.

Governments make all attempts to prevent the passage of illegal materials, especially illegal drugs, through their countries. You could be imprisoned for life for transporting or mailing illegal drugs to a foreign country.

At NSF's request, all mail destined for the continental side of the program is screened and inspected by the New Zealand Customs Service. On occasion, U.S. citizens have been detained by Customs on their return from Antarctica. Some of them have been found guilty of mailing illegal materials and have been fined. U.S. law also prohibits the mailing of controlled substances and illegal drugs. It is U.S. policy (April 6, 1982, Federal Register, pages 14864-14866) to ensure personnel authorized to use military postal facilities do not abuse the customs, tax, and other laws of the host country. In short:

- Obey the law.
- Do not try to take illegal substances through foreign countries.
- Do not mail illegal substances.
- Tell your friends not to mail illegal substances to you.

Stay in Contact

While awaiting transportation to Antarctica from New Zealand or Chile, you must keep local program representatives informed of where you are and how they can contact you. Transport schedules are often revised on short notice.

Be Patient

Whether you travel to Antarctica via a research vessel or by air, you should be prepared to handle delays and changes in schedules. Every effort is made to ensure the safety of program participants, and that often means departures are delayed or flights are turned around. This may be due to mechanical considerations, ice conditions, or especially the weather.

Currency Exchange

Learn the currency exchange rate before departing for a foreign country. Bank representatives will exchange U.S. money for foreign money at U.S. international airports, but generally, a better exchange rate will be found in the country whose currency you are purchasing than in the U.S. You can change money at most banks in foreign countries, but remember that banks and stores may be closed on weekends and holidays. ATM cards can be used in both New Zealand and Chile. In Chile, rates can vary significantly between banks and currency exchange houses.

Chilean and New Zealand banks will not cash personal checks drawn on U.S. checking accounts. A credit card with a chip is required in many foreign stores.

Electrical Compatibility

The electrical voltage in New Zealand is 230v 50hz. In Chile, it is 220v 50hz. Most laptop computers have a compliant AC converter. You will require an adapter, which can be purchased from hardware and travel stores, to connect to the wall outlet. Some small appliances, such as razors and hair dryers, have dual voltage capabilities, but they still require an adapter plug. You can find information on the type of electricity used and the electrical plugs needed around the world at various websites, such as https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mains_electricity_by_country.

Pre-Deployment Personal Vacations

NOTE: Contract employees are not allowed to take pre-deployment personal vacations en route to Antarctica.

Participants wishing to vacation in New Zealand, Chile, or elsewhere in South America before deploying to Antarctica must inform the ASC Travel Office **via their Travel Request Worksheet** eight weeks before deployment.

Participants vacationing in New Zealand before going to Antarctica must contact the Christchurch Travel Office at least three days before their scheduled date to fly to Antarctica. Flight schedules to Antarctica often change, and it is advantageous to both you and the Christchurch Travel Office if regular contact is made during the period of leave.

Post-Deployment Personal Vacations

You may elect to travel before returning to the U.S. The USAP requires travelers to cover any extra expenses related to post-deployment vacations. This includes changes to airline ticketing, and the fare difference could be significant. Participants are responsible for making their own leisure travel arrangements, and you must comply with local Immigration and Customs regulations (see next section). When you stay in a country as a tourist, the USAP is no longer your sponsor.

TRAVELING THROUGH NEW ZEALAND

All ASC-ticketed participants traveling through New Zealand en route to Antarctica will have been provided with a 12-month visitor permit letter before deployment. Present this letter to New Zealand Immigration when you first arrive. Failure to do so will result in you receiving a three-month permit. **Do not use the express passport kiosks** in the airport, as the machines will not provide a visitor's permit with an adequate length of time for most deployments. Confirm that you have been given a 12-month visitor's permit before exiting Immigration.

If you deploy for longer than a year and your visitor's permit or visa will expire while you are deployed, you can obtain a three-month extension by providing the following information to New Zealand Immigration at INZCHCExpress@mbie.govt.nz:

- Name, as indicated on your passport
- Passport number and expiration date
- Date of birth
- Your redeployment date (approximate will suffice)

(Note that the USAP regards the above information as Personal Identifiable Information that should not be transmitted via USAP e-mail.)

If you plan to travel in New Zealand after your deployment, you must ensure that your permit or visa will not expire during that time. You can request an electronic extension from the above address while you are still in Antarctica. Visas can also be extended for a fee at any N.Z. Immigration office.

A week or so before you arrive in Christchurch, the Christchurch Travel Office will send you an e-mail with your hotel reservation and ECW issue time, as well as information on taxis, and shuttles. If you have a problem with mishandled luggage, file a claim with the airline at the airport upon arrival. Retain a copy of your luggage claim form and advise Travel Office personnel so they are aware of the problem.

Accommodations. ASC makes reservations in advance at Christchurch hotels and motels for all participants, for the length of their stay. This helps the Christchurch office find you if there is a change in the date or time of your departure to Antarctica. Do not change your reservation without prior approval from the Christchurch Travel Office. If you do not honor your hotel reservation, expect to be billed by the hotel for the first night of the booking.

If you plan to stay with friends, provide ASC Travel before you deploy with the contact telephone number where messages can be left for you. Flight schedules change often, and it is critical that the office knows how to contact you with updates. For those organizations not ticketed by ASC, please provide accommodation information to the Christchurch Participant Services office.

Always keep your passport and valuables on you. Hotel/motel bills, telephone charges, and the like should be settled the night before your departure from Christchurch.

Grantees are responsible for paying for their accommodations.

ASC pays for accommodations for its employees.

Medical care. If you need medical care in New Zealand, please contact the PAE NZ medical coordinator, who will assist you with arranging medical and/or dental appointments. There will be a charge for your visit to the doctor or dentist. See Chapter 2: Insurance.



Transportation. An extensive network of bus routes serves Christchurch, Lyttelton, the airport, and USAP offices. Taxi and shuttle details are provided in your arrival documents.

Car rental and insurance. If you rent a car, be sure you know New Zealand traffic regulations and have sufficient insurance. A booklet on traffic laws called the Road Code is available at auto rental agencies. Driving is on the left side of the road and requires strict attention. A driving permit is not required if you can provide a valid U.S. driver's license.

ECW Clothing Issue

ECW clothing and accessories will be provided to you at no charge at the Christchurch Clothing Distribution Center (CDC). The clothing is functional, sturdy, and cost-effective. It includes special items of outerwear required for the Antarctic climate, such as parkas and boots. Most of it is in men's sizes but will fit both men and women. Proper clothing fit and functionality are important to achieve maximum protection. Be sure to provide accurate measurements on the ECW form submitted with your travel/deployment

forms. In addition, it is important that you try on and test all ECW clothing at your fitting session (including boots) to ensure it is fully operational (check all zippers!). Any sizing errors will be corrected at that time. If you expect to gain weight while in Antarctica, which is common, select clothing that fits loosely. There will be no additional clothing issued once you are in Antarctica.

The type and amount of clothing you receive depends on where you work and what your job entails. Most, but not all, ECW clothing is mandatory. If you are new to the program, you must take all the clothing issued to you according to the USAP ECW Policy (www.nsf.gov/geo/opp/documents/policy/AIL-POL_1000.06%20ECW%20Gear.pdf).

Some issued clothing, especially parkas, is subject to theft, and special attention should be taken to prevent loss. Abnormal damage or unreported loss of clothing will result in you being billed for repair or replacement costs. Any theft or loss should be reported immediately to the NSF representative or the station manager. It is illegal for you to mail, buy, or sell government property, including USAP clothing.



A participant tries on ECW gear during clothing issue at the CDC in Christchurch, New Zealand. Photo by Elaine Hood.

TRAVELING TO MCMURDO STATION

The flight from Christchurch to McMurdo is called your Ice flight, and the date you fly is called your Ice date. Report for your flight at the time given to you by the Christchurch Travel Office.

You will be asked to pack a “boomerang bag” with personal items, clothing, and other essentials needed for a one- or two-night delay. In the event your flight turns around (boomerangs) or is otherwise delayed after you have checked in, this is the only bag that will be returned to you. As part of the check-in process, you will be given time to change into your ECW gear, pack your carry-on and boomerang bags, and store any baggage you will not need in Antarctica in the CDC secure storage room.

Notify the ASC representative or the agent of any accompanied cargo or baggage that exceeds your authorized weight. Remember that authorization for excess baggage must be obtained in advance from ASC. This also applies to your northbound return. See Chapter 3: How and What to Pack.

You will be issued an Antarctic Departure Card, which you are required to complete before moving through to the Antarctic Passenger Terminal (APT). After dressing for your flight and completing your Antarctic Departure Card, you will take your luggage to the APT for official check-in, where your passport and departure card will be checked and your luggage weighed. This is commonly known as “bag drag.” **Make sure you keep your passport accessible.**

After check-in, you will no longer have access to your baggage except the carry-on piece. You may not leave the area unless authorized by officials. Transportation to the aircraft is provided. Personnel who, in the judgment of the crew, are intoxicated will not be permitted to board the aircraft. This applies when traveling to or from Antarctica or when traveling within Antarctica.

Your flight will take between five and eight hours, depending on the aircraft. Military aircraft are not designed for passenger comfort, though food and water are provided. There are toilets, but the facilities can be awkward.

The weather in Antarctica when you arrive is likely to be clear, cold, and very bright. After the plane has landed, gather your possessions, zip up your parka, and put on sunglasses and gloves. Be ready for transport to McMurdo Station soon after you disembark. Upon arrival at McMurdo Station, you will be given an in-brief and instructions about your lodging and about collecting your luggage. Generally, your checked luggage will be ready for you at the MCC about two hours after you arrive.

TRAVELING WITHIN ANTARCTICA

Timeframes and transportation schedules for work in remote locations are planned well in advance. Working together, grantees, NSF, implementers, and transport schedulers agree on a field plan that is published in the Research Support Plan (RSP) six weeks before the participant deploys. All plans are subject to change, given weather conditions and other unforeseen circumstances.

Grantees and ASC employees traveling to remote locations should read the *Field Manual for the U.S. Antarctic Program*, available in PDF under the Travel and Deployment link at www.usap.gov.

Air Transport

Transportation to remote stations and field camps is provided by fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters, and/or ground vehicles. Teams planning to travel must meet with Fixed-Wing Operations and/or Helicopter Operations staff to confirm flight plans and arrange personnel and cargo movements.

South Pole. Grantees and employees traveling to the South Pole will coordinate their trip with the South Pole population specialist and station supervisor. Because of limited berthing, all participants going to South Pole must be approved by NSF well in advance of the trip.

Deep field camps. All cargo and passenger movements to and from deep field camps must be planned in detail with the cargo coordinator or Fixed-Wing Operations staff, and they must be approved by the ASC continental field supervisor.



A Twin Otter delivering people and supplies to a deep-field camp. Photo by Peter Rejcek.

Fixed-wing aircraft. Intracontinental air support is currently provided by three types of fixed-wing aircraft, all ski-equipped: LC-130 Hercules, Baslers (modified DC-3s), and Twin Otters.

The LC-130s are operated by the 109th Airlift Wing of the New York Air National Guard. These airplanes provide heavy-lift capability to all inland stations, as well as search-and-rescue for the entire continent. Science project team members must first work with Fixed-Wing Operations staff or cargo coordinators to develop their project's logistics plan, and then coordinate with Science Cargo staff to stage their cargo. All project cargo must be staged and ready 72 hours before scheduled transport. Passengers must check in at Air Services with their

personal luggage (except for one carry-on) the night before the scheduled flight. This is called “bag drag.”

Twin Otters are twin-engine, high-wing aircraft used by small field teams deploying to remote locations that typically do not have groomed landing areas. The aircraft can carry small to moderate cargo loads. Baslers are larger, twin-engine, low-wing aircraft that can carry moderate loads for longer distances but have ski-field grooming requirements and other landing-site restrictions. Science project team members must work with Fixed-Wing Operations staff to develop a transport schedule and create cargo and passenger priority lists. The team must then work with Science Cargo staff to stage all cargo 72 hours before scheduled transport.

On the day of the flight, science team members and ASC camp staff will check in with Fixed-Wing Operations staff before transporting personal bags to the airfield via the shuttle service. Both science and ASC team members will assist flight crews in loading the Basler and/or Twin Otter.

NOTE: Please provide accurate weights for all cargo, including personal bags, to the Fixed-Wing Operations office.



A helicopter takes off from the sea ice at Explorers Cove. Photo by Jim Mastro.

Helicopters are used principally for logistical support in the Ross Island region and McMurdo Dry Valleys. Anyone expecting to fly on a helicopter must attend helicopter-specific safety training. People traveling to the Dry Valleys must attend environmental training, as well. Cargo capacity and range vary depending on the model of helicopter. Science team members work with the helicopter staff to arrange passenger and cargo movement.

Detailed packing and planning guidelines, including field and mechanical equipment weights, are presented in the field manual noted above.

Safety. As with all operations in Antarctica, safety comes first. Mechanical problems and bad weather can delay or cancel missions.

Aircraft Travel Rules and Guidelines

- You must be manifested on all aircraft on which you travel. Any unauthorized travel may result in your removal from Antarctica.
- Be on time. Departures will not be delayed for persons arriving late or for cargo or passengers identified after the deadlines provided by either Fixed-Wing Operations or Helicopter Operations staff.
- Passengers can make a brown-bag flight lunch from the McMurdo cafeteria "grab and go" cooler before transport to the airfield.
- Do not consume alcoholic beverages before a flight. You will not be allowed to board the aircraft if you appear to be under the influence of alcohol.
- Consumption of alcoholic beverages is not permitted onboard any USAP aircraft.
- You must wear specific items of ECW clothing. The requirements will be posted in advance of your flight.
- All hazardous materials must be packed and certified by USAP cargo personnel. You may not carry unauthorized hazardous material in your baggage or on your person.
- Anyone flying on a USAP aircraft (other than on South Pole flights) must attend Field Safety Training (see Chapter 6).

RETURNING TO NEW ZEALAND

Grantees

At least 10 days before your planned departure from Antarctica, advise the ASC passenger coordinator in the Chalet, or the science coordinator at South Pole, of your intended departure date. They will coordinate your departure with PAE NZ Participant Services in Christchurch. You must ensure that your retrograde cargo is ready for transport. See Retrograde (Return) Science Cargo in Chapter 4.

ASC Employees

Weeks before redeployment begins, employees are given check-out instructions. Before completion of your contract, your supervisor will schedule you on a flight from McMurdo to Christchurch.

All Participants

Remember that prior approval for excess baggage is required for anything over the standard limits (see Chapter 3).

If you check in for a northbound flight in McMurdo without the necessary excess baggage approvals, you will be required to mail any excess at your own expense through the U.S. Post Office at McMurdo Station.

Be sure to carry your passport on you and not in your checked bag.

NOTE: Removing any materials from Antarctica, such as wood, bone, eggshells, feathers, and plant or animal parts is prohibited unless specifically authorized by an NSF-issued permit.

Immediately upon returning to Christchurch, you must return your ECW clothing to the CDC, even if you think it may be of no further use. You will also retrieve any personal belongings you left in the CDC storage room. You will be given information about your accommodations and onward travel at that time.

NOTE: Your APO privilege to mail boxes at U.S. rates expires 10 days after your return to Christchurch. See Chapter 6: Postal Services.

TRAVELING THROUGH CHILE

In Chile, the USAP has contracted with Damco to provide passenger support and manage local facilities.

Chile, Argentina, and the U.S. frequently cooperate in Antarctica. Both Argentina and Chile are Antarctic Treaty nations, and both have year-round stations along the Antarctic Peninsula. While Spanish is the national language, English is widely spoken in Chile, including by the agents ASC employs to assist you in your passage. Nevertheless, a simple Spanish phrase book may prove helpful.

Health care. If you require health care while in Chile, contact the local Damco representative for assistance in making appointments. If you are in Punta Arenas, you can contact the marine project coordinator on the vessel for assistance. Be prepared to pay for services provided. See Chapter 2: Insurance.

Upon your arrival at the Santiago airport, and before you pass through customs, you will be met by a Damco representative who will assist you in picking up your baggage and passing through customs. He or she will also direct you from the international terminal to the domestic terminal for your flight to Punta Arenas. It is your responsibility to be alert for domestic gate changes, which may or may not be announced in English.

Once you arrive in Punta Arenas, a Damco representative will transport you to your hotel, notify you of your ECW clothing issue time, ship embarkation time, and ship orientation time. Please show up promptly, as the window to complete your outfitting is short, and ship schedules are often tight.

Damco will provide you with a "QR code card" that gives you access to the vessel through the Prat Pier security gate, so you can come and go easily between the city and the pier area. You may be asked to board the vessel immediately. However, most people traveling to Palmer Station are scheduled to spend one night in a hotel and board the ship the following day. Do not request to board the vessel early.

Hotel rooms for ASC personnel are direct-billed, but you must pay for incidentals and meals. Grantees must pay for their hotel rooms. Agents and ships' representatives can provide local information about restaurants, shops, and money exchange:

Damco Chile SA (Santiago)

Cerro El Plomo, Floor 7, Office 707, Santiago de Chile
 Contact: asc.scl@damco.com (USAP Cargo only) +56 (2) 828-9900
 Emergency: David Peña, David.Pena@damco.com, +56 (9) 8156-8164

Damco Chile SA (Punta Arenas)

Warehouse #4, Prat Pier
 O'Higgins #1385
 Punta Arenas, Chile
 Contact: asc.puq@damco.com, +1 720 568-2870
 Emergency: Claudio Barrientos, claudio.barrientos@damco.com, +56 (9) 7548-3942

NOTE: Nothing may be charged to the Damco agent that has not been approved in writing by the NSF/OPP Ocean Projects manager.

ECW Clothing Issue

ECW clothing will be provided to you at no charge from the Punta Arenas warehouse. You are responsible for the safekeeping and accountability of all items issued and may be charged for loss or damage as a result of gross negligence or willful misconduct.

To ensure an acceptable fit, be sure to provide accurate measurements on the ECW form you submit with your travel/deployment forms. It is important that you try on and test all ECW clothing at your fitting session. Any sizing errors will be corrected at that time. The type and amount of clothing you receive depends on where you work and what your job entails. If you are new to the program you must take all the clothing issued to you. There will be no additional clothing issued once you are in Antarctica. (See www.nsf.gov/geo/opp/documents/policy/AIL-POL_1000.06%20ECW%20Gear.pdf).

Participants deploying to the vessels and Palmer Station should note that there is a considerable amount of rain and other precipitation on the Peninsula. Any personal clothing choices should take this into account. For information regarding Peninsula ECW options, see www.usap.gov/usapgov/TravelAndDeployment/contenthandler.cfm?id=1860.

Baggage

Due to crowded conditions on the research vessels, you should pack the clothing and personal items you'll need on the journey into a single piece of baggage. The remainder of your baggage will be stowed in the ship's hold and returned to you on arrival at the work site.

Only science equipment that is used in multi-year projects may be stored in the Punta Arenas warehouse, and only if approved in advance by NSF.

TRAVELING TO PALMER STATION

Travel to Palmer Station and other Peninsula research sites is primarily via the LMG. The transit takes 4-5 days, depending on routing and sea conditions. Before sailing, the ASC representative and ship's personnel will provide an orientation that includes ship procedures, safety policies, and room assignments. Attendance is mandatory.

Ship transits are usually crowded, so please comply with regulations and show courtesy in common areas, passageways, and dining areas. Remember that ships operate 24/7 and crew members and staff are either working or sleeping at all times. Be considerate and quiet in passageways.

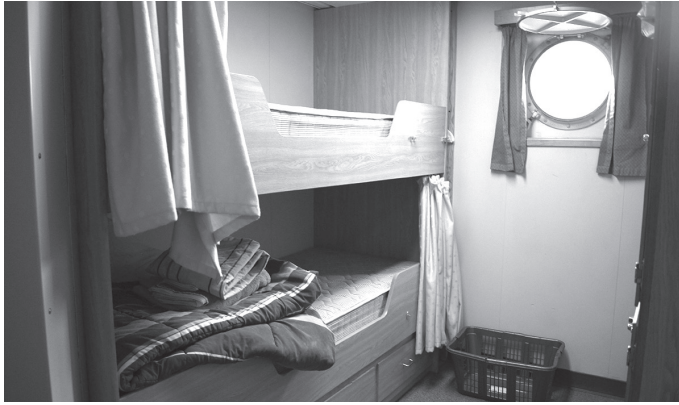
There is no charge for meals. If you are prone to motion sickness, consult with your personal physician before deployment. Over-the-counter medications (e.g., Meclizine) are often sufficient to relieve sea sickness. Bland crackers, such as saltines or soda crackers, can also help, and it is important to stay hydrated.

Upon arrival at Palmer Station, please clean your cabin and place all linens in the laundry room to assist the ship's stewards. Take all your baggage and personal items with you when you disembark.

RETURNING TO CHILE

Grantees

At least three weeks before you plan to return from the Antarctic Peninsula to South America, give your northbound travel plan to the ASC administrative coordinator at Palmer Station or the MPC on the vessel. Identify any requirement for excess baggage or special handling of material. Airline and hotel bookings will be confirmed for you with the appropriate agent. You should also ensure that any retrograde cargo is ready for transport. See "Retrograde (Return) Science Cargo" in Chapter 4.



A cabin onboard the research vessel Laurence M. Gould. Photo by Elaine Hood.

ASC Employees

Your departure will be scheduled before you complete your contract. Be sure you notify the ASC administrative coordinator or MPC of any travel plans.

All Participants

Upon arrival in South America, you will be met by a Damco representative who will give you your return itinerary and collect your ECW clothing. Generally, the clothing is collected on the vessel prior to docking in Punta Arenas and returned to the warehouse in bulk.

Individuals who plan personal travel following their return to Chile are responsible for their own transportation to the Punta Arenas airport and will not receive "meet and greet" service in Santiago.

