

AFAR

Cold-Water Cruises Have Never Been Hotter

On new sailings in some of the world's iciest places, excursions come with ice axes, dogsleds, polar bear sightings, and more. Here, nine experiences to book.

By Hannah Walhout | August 25, 2026



Think of a cruise, and you might picture Caribbean islands, Mediterranean beaches, or villages on the banks of the world's great rivers. But it's often the coldest, most remote places that are truly best visited via the water. Smaller ships and expedition yachts, especially, can enter dramatic fjords, weave between ice floes, anchor in sparsely inhabited areas, and provide a warm home base to return to after a day out in the chill.

The excursions tend to be just as special. In cruise destinations near the ends of the earth, you may go scuba diving in the Southern Ocean, hike past glaciers in Patagonia, dip into hot springs in hard-to-reach corners of Iceland, or fish for Arctic char in far-north Canada with Inuit guides. Below, we've rounded up some upcoming sailings to have on your radar across Alaska, Greenland, Norway, Antarctica, and beyond—and the one-of-a-kind experiences you can have along the way.

Surf and Ski

Prefer traveling in private? In late 2026, luxury operator EYOS Expeditions will begin to offer charters in Iceland aboard a 12-passenger expedition ship (complete with a hot tub and a sauna). Every itinerary is customizable, and stops could include heli-skiing or night surfing under the bright skies of the captivating aurora borealis.