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5 Expedition Cruises for Mobility-Challenged Travellers BY JUDI COHEN

ADVENTURE CRUISES

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parts of the world. And, if you might need a bit more TLC or accessibility to travel, we've got you. Here, luxury expedition cruise expert Judi Cohen reports on five expedition cruise ships

and finds some of the best for people with limited mobility.

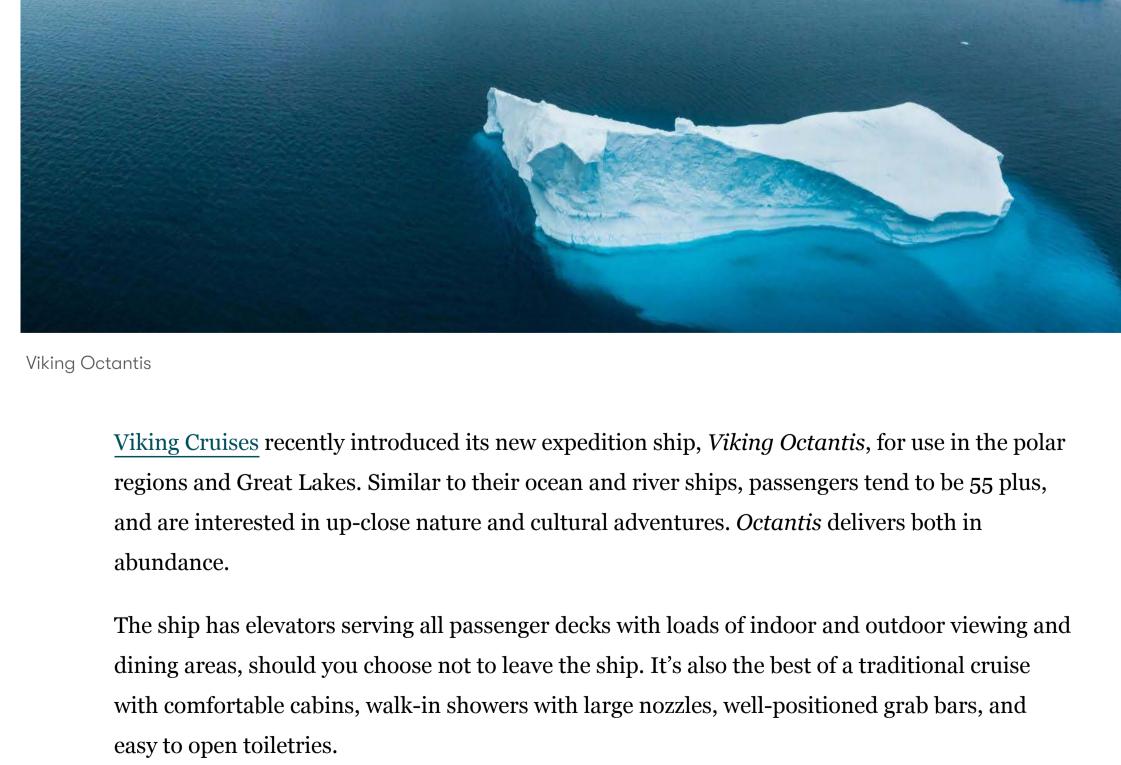
varying skies and weather conditions.

You may have heard lately about expedition cruising, where you can travel to far flung, off-thebeaten-track locations and get up close with nature in comfort, accompanied by expert expedition staff. In the past few years, expedition ships have become a lot more luxurious, even with fine dining, and these cruises have become extremely popular (particularly in the Arctic and Antarctic) by

adventurous travellers of all ages and levels of mobility. However, it's important to know that – despite all the new comforts – these exhilarating expedition cruises can be quite physical and demanding. They can involve transfers from the ship to Zodiacs and tenders, challenging landings with steep steps and rocky beaches under

One thing I have noticed in my travels on these ships is that these cruises attract a wide variety of guests – of nearly all ages and most levels of mobility. If you're an adventurous traveller looking for something different, who is older, or with limited mobility, there are a number of expedition cruise lines that can accommodate you. A travel advisor that specializes in

expedition cruises is also a good place to start. The Cruise Line: Viking Expedition Cruises The Bonus: Submarines and Special Operations Boats



rustic fishing lodge.

Adventurers

The expedition equipment includes kayaks, six-passenger submarines, special operations boats and Zodiacs. I should note that winds and waves can make the transfer from the ship to the tenders challenging. Plenty of crew are on hand to assist with the transfers. For adventures on land, hiking poles are available. On one of my excursions, there were many passengers with canes and hiking poles enjoying the hike in the provincial park and a visit to a

sound scary, my husband and I (both in our late 60s) enjoyed our sub dive and, with the assistance of the Zodiac driver and the submarine captain, we managed the transfer and the embarkation and disembarkation from the submarine without difficulty. Activities off the ship are entirely optional. Those opting to stay on the ship can enjoy being in nature and seeing wildlife from the decks, attend seminars, relax in the Nordic Spa, read from

In terms of wheelchairs, Viking's policy is that guests must travel with their own wheelchair and

an able-bodied companion, as the staff is not permitted to lift guests or push wheelchairs. Be

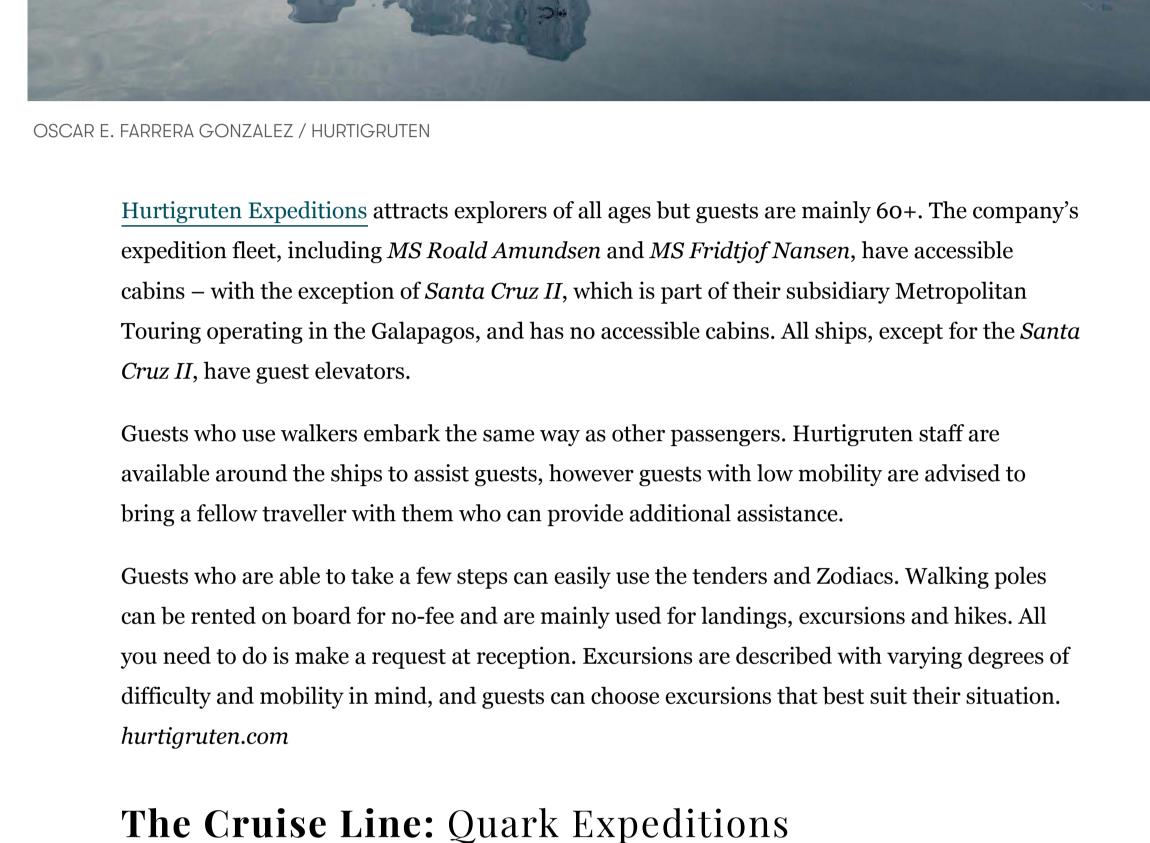
the extensive collection of books about expeditions and explorers.

sure to reach out to Viking before booking to ensure there are no new

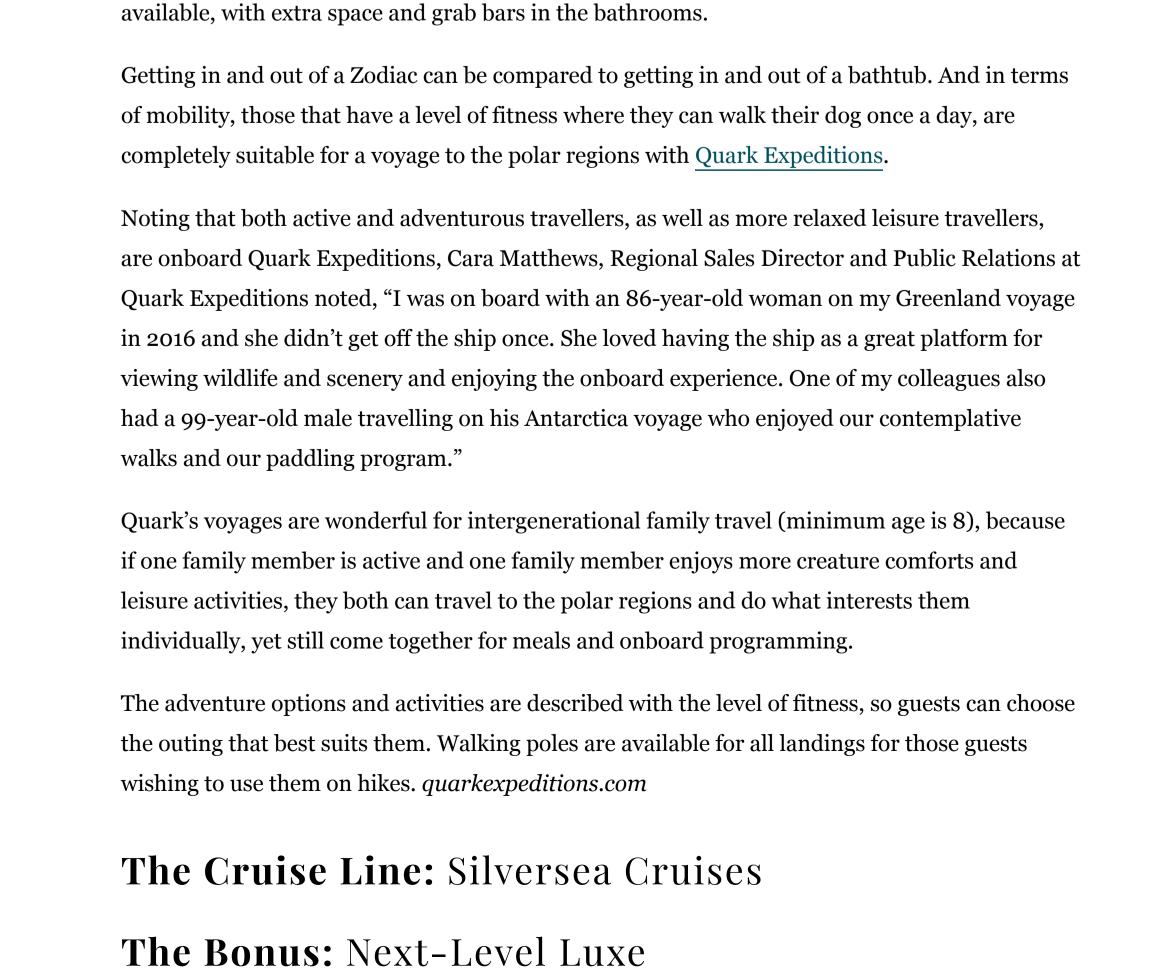
It is also possible to travel in the ship's submarines, however this would not be suitable for those

with claustrophobia, motion sickness or the inability to climb a ladder. While this might all

requirements. vikingcruisescanada.com The Cruise Line: Hurtigruten The Bonus: Focus on Older Experienced



The Bonus: Multi-generational appeal



Silversea Cruises' Silver Wind in the Arctic.

Known best for their impressive fleet of luxurious all-suite ships, Silversea Cruise's expedition

Every Silversea excursion has a clear description to indicate the level of mobility required to

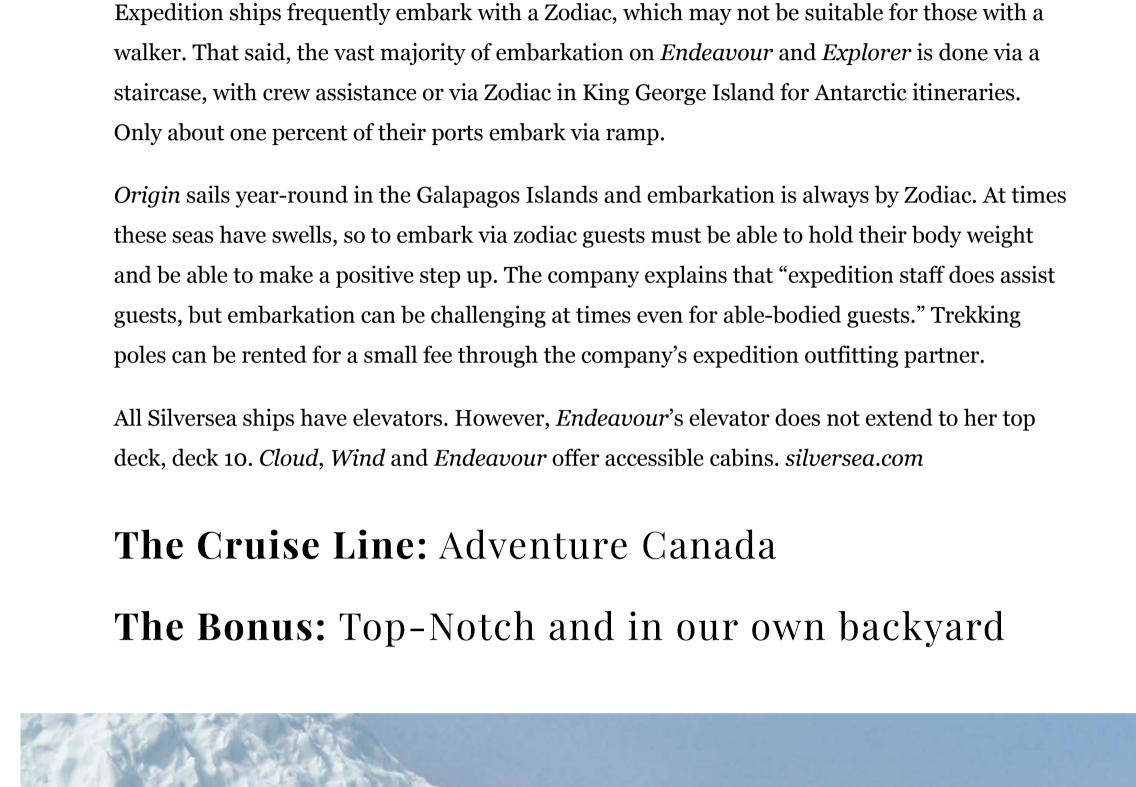
Cruise voyages to both polar regions. While some consider "crossing the Drake Passage" to

The company's newest ultra-luxury expedition ship, Silver Endeavour, even has options for Fly-

Antarctica a rite of passage, others will find it easier to fly to a local air base at the start or end of

ships including Silver Explorer, Silver Origin, Silver Wind and Silver Cloud provide

opportunities for the mobility challenged to enjoy expedition cruising in style.



age 60+ with an adventurous spirit. Guests with very limited mobility who use canes and walkers are welcome, and ideally should be able to navigate at least one flight of stairs as wheelchairs cannot be accommodated on the vessel. A variety of guided experiences are available in destinations and range in difficulty and distance to assist guests in choosing appropriate excursions. With everything from beachcomber walks to challenging 10 km hikes, passengers are broken into smaller groups for the best experience. In discussing the itineraries, Cedar Swan, CEO of Adventure Canada explained: "It's easier to accommodate limited mobility on Atlantic Canada and European programs, in communities where infrastructure and transportation are provided. The physical landscape In the Arctic, combined with the Zodiac ship-to-shore landings, can create some challenges. Some guests are fearful for the first time; however, they find their rides on Zodiacs to be unexpected highlights

Family-owned Adventure Canada offers expedition cruises aboard Ocean Endeavour to the

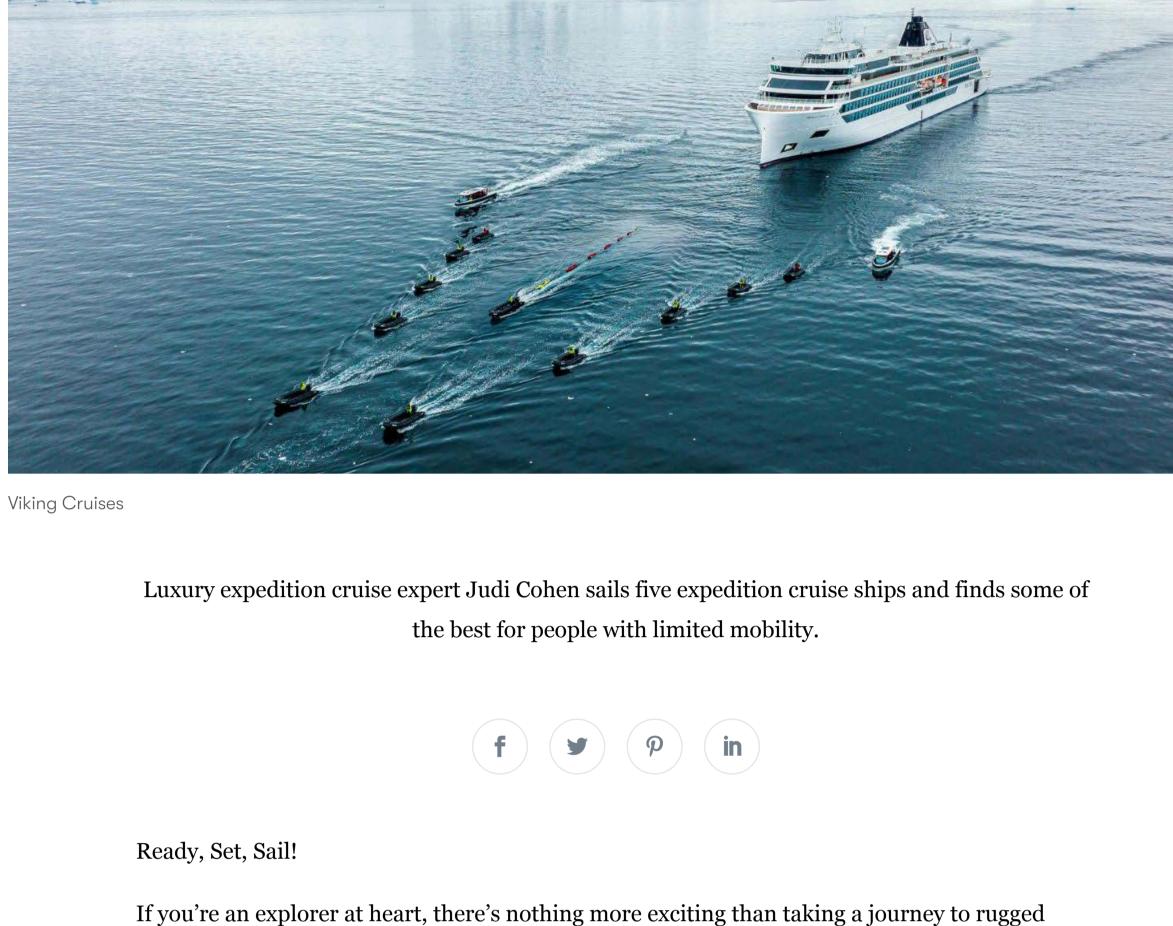
Arctic, Antarctic, Canada, South and Central America and Europe. The majority of clients are

provided for those choosing not to go ashore. While cabins are not accessible, they have walk-in showers and safety grab bars for stability and lots of room to move around comfortably. www.adventurecanada.com Before You Go If you are dreaming of an expedition cruise to a polar region or another far-flung destination,

check with the cruise lines on how they can assist in turning your dreams into memories first.

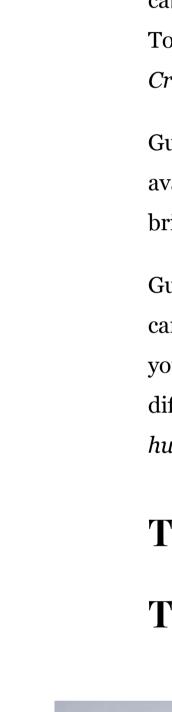
Be sure to request passenger forms so that you can understand the restrictions before booking

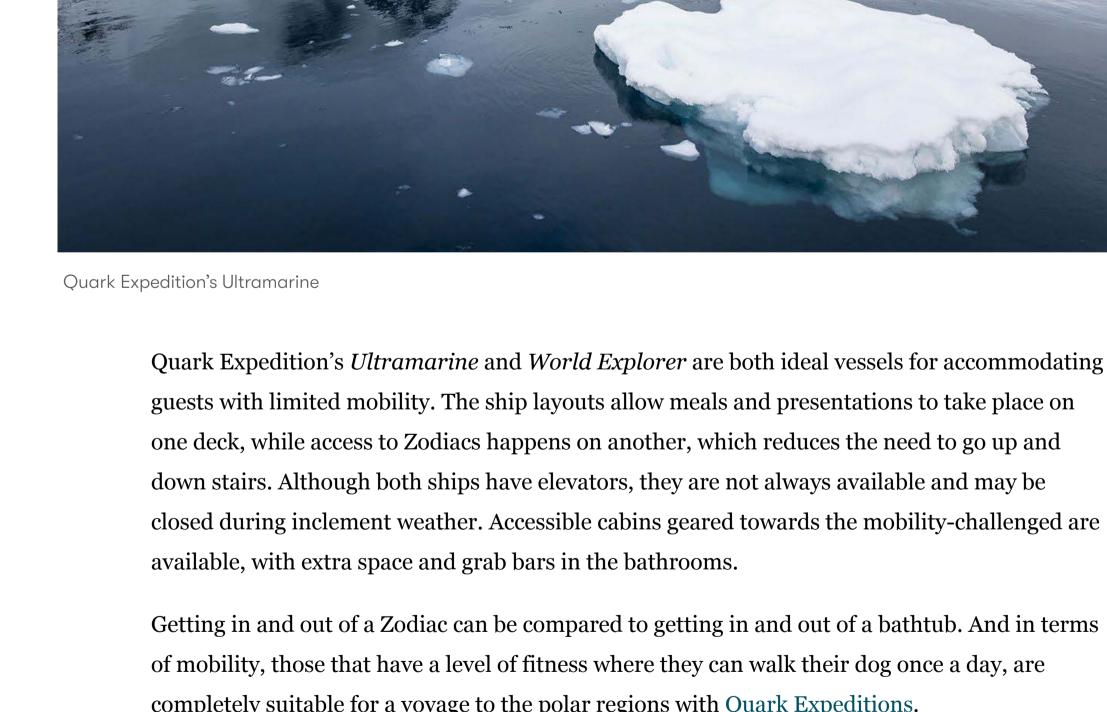
travel, and remember to ask ahead of time if cruise staff are available to assist with embarkation and disembarkation. For travellers with an adventurous spirit, be realistic about your abilities while making your expedition experience as challenging and enriching as you can. Many of the destinations and wildlife experiences on expedition cruise itineraries can be enjoyed from the lounges and decks

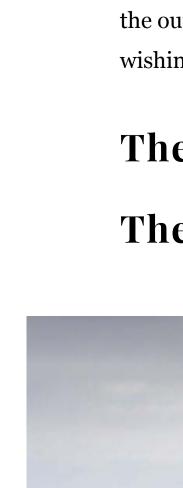


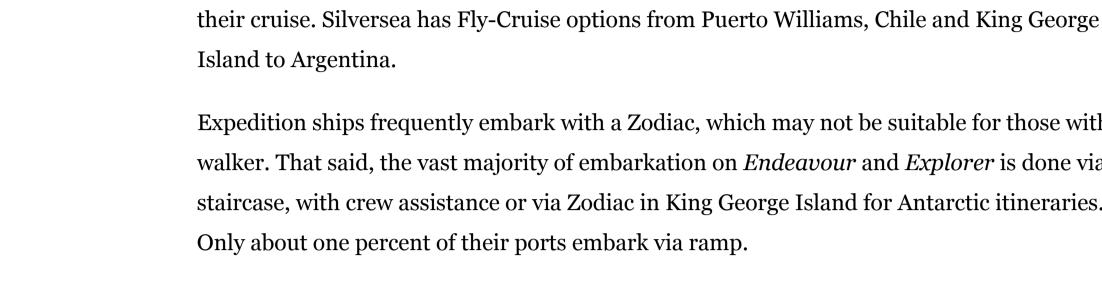












enjoy the excursion.

Adventure Canada Ocean Endeavour

and a lot of fun. There are six steps from the Zodiac platform into the ship, and then the majority of clients take the stairs up to their cabins. There is an elevator serving decks 3 through 6, but not 7 through 9." She added that for couples with a big discrepancy in their mobility levels, there are options for both to have a guided experience. Onboard education is always

> on the ship. Before you over-pack, check with the cruise line. Many expedition cruise companies offer a

range of complimentary expedition gear, including parka, backpack, water bottle, use of boots, waterproof pants and walking poles for use during the cruise; some of the parkas are yours to take home after your adventure! New expedition ships are being introduced each year by cruise lines. Your travel agent or the cruise companies can provide the most current offerings.