



Stand Up Paddle-Boarding (SUP) In The Tropics

The experience of stand up paddle-boarding (SUP) in one of the most biologically intense regions of the world both above and under the water is guaranteed to stir your soul. Paddle above vibrant coral reefs, or drift quietly under the backdrop of lush rainforests.

Weather permitting, the SUP activity is normally available anytime the other expeditioners go out.

Rather than travelling large distances, our aim is to see as much as possible. We paddle anywhere between 2.5-5 km / 1-2 mi. (2 to 4 hours) per outing, sometimes taking a snack and a cool drink to enjoy on our excursion.

Our group of up to 8 paddlers generally visit the same wildlife sites as our fellow expeditioners. However, the shallow draft of our boards means that we also have the opportunity to access areas that are often not accessible by Zodiacs.

The warm aqua blue waters are perfect for spotting manta rays, dolphins, turtles and whales. The elements play an important role in any paddle outing so it is important to understand that our paddle boarding time may be affected by the weather that we experience.



Required experience

For our tropical trips you should have some prior paddling experience, be active in the outdoors and have an adventurous spirit. We may encounter wind on these trips, however the water is fairly protected.

You do not need to be an expert, however you are required to be able to swim. You should also be proficient at standing up on your own and paddling in some winds. It is also important that you gain some practice launching from deep water as we often launch directly off our floating platform. All this can easily be practiced at home before your trip. You should paddle in a variety of weather conditions to prepare for your tropical adventure.

Our guides do not offer instructional classes for beginners. Therefore, the SUP option is not recommended for complete novices. If your experience is limited, we'd encourage you to call us to discuss your suitability. There is often ample time to gain the required experience before you depart. We may be able to recommend a reputable SUP operator in your area for some tuition prior to the trip.

Please note: Your guide will assess your ability on the initial paddle, and if you have insufficient experience, he or she reserves the right to restrict your participation in rougher conditions or longer outings.

Fitness requirements

You should be fit enough to paddle for up to two hours at a time, and climb between moving Zodiacs on the water. Regular exercise is recommended, as the fitter you are the more you will enjoy the experience. The more paddles you can do before the trip, the better (we recommend at least 3 to 4 outings prior to your voyage).

Number of outings per voyage

Stand up paddle-boarding is offered in place of regular shore excursions. We aim to paddle as frequently as shore landings, or Zodiac-cruises, are offered to all other passengers, sometimes more. Depending on the itinerary, this is generally twice per day.

Group size

Our guide to paddler ratio is 1:8 and we provide a safety zodiac in the area.

There are up to 8 places available for SUP.

Age limit

Paddlers should be aged 14 or over.

Our Guides

Our guides have many years of paddling experience in our destinations. The guide will lead the group on each excursion, explaining facts about the wildlife and other highlights as we come across them.

The Paddle Boards

We primarily use inflatable RED Sport paddle boards and provide paddle leashes and adjustable paddles.

We provide a waterproof backpack to bring along any essentials on our excursions.

The boards are quite stable and we generally launch in deep water from our specially designed floating platform behind the ship. We will always paddle back to the ship in deep water unless conditions are too rough and we return to the ship by Zodiac.

If you fall off, the guide will assist by stabilising the board if conditions are windy. Our support Zodiac will be nearby as well.



Equipment included

- RED Sport inflatable SUP boards with fins
- Accent adjustable carbon paddles
- Safety equipment
- Male and female PFDs
- 20-litre waterproof back packs
- Neoprene boots (available sizes 4-14)

What to bring

We recommend:

- One long sleeve lightweight synthetic shirt. This is highly recommended for sun protection while paddling. Cotton is not very suitable for paddling as it gets stiff with salt and can irritate the skin. A light-weight capilene or polypropylene top may be suitable.
- A lycra sun top is useful for snorkeling
- Light-weight rain jacket or spray jacket
- Headgear: a wide brimmed hat for protection from the sun is essential. Visors are inadequate. A hat with a stiff brim that will hold rigid in a breeze, e.g. straw hat with a strap to put under your chin is good. A light scarf for your neck can be useful.
- Gloves: cycling or paddling gloves for sun protection and blisters
- Sarong - useful for covering your legs whilst on sandy beaches.
- Two pairs of water shorts and swimwear
- One pair of reef shoes for paddling or a good fitting pair of sandals that attach solidly. The neoprene booties we have on board are quite heavy.
- Waterproof and reef-friendly sunscreen blockout and lip balm

- Sunglasses with side visors and tie or string for attaching them to prevent loss
- Water bottle: 1 to 2 litre capacity
- Talcum powder to prevent salt water rash.
- Drybags, waterproof bag for camera or phone.

Weather

In Costa Rica and Panama, April is the end of the dry season, with the shoulder season beginning in May with increasing humidity. Afternoon rain showers are possible in May with temperatures ranging from 26°C to 36°C / 80°F to 96°F. Winds are generally light at this time of year. The water temperature ranges from 27 -29 degrees C.

Surf landings are not likely, but be prepared to paddle in a small swell or wind chop, with winds up to 10 knots. We will not paddle if wind conditions are too strong and there is no sheltered area for paddling however, we will try and offer some "downwind" paddles and return by Zodiac.

If the weather changes during our outing we will head back to the ship and perhaps join a shore excursion. The ship's captain, expedition leader and SUP guide always maintain close contact to ensure a safe paddling experience.

Paddling amongst the wildlife

The astonishing biodiversity in the nature reserves of the tropical places we visit ensure superb wildlife-viewing opportunities, both above and below the water. Stand up paddle boards offer a unique opportunity to view marine and land mammals, coral reefs, tropical fish, sea birds and an astonishing range of rainforest birds. We will bring our snorkeling gear with us during our paddles and take advantage of any opportunities to view the marine life up close.



Frequently asked questions

Can I carry anything on the paddle board?

Yes, you will be supplied with a waterproof backpack for extra clothing, binoculars and anything that needs to be kept dry. You should also carry a water bottle. You are also welcome to bring along your own 5-10 litre dry bag for personal items.

Can I bring my camera?

Yes, but we highly recommend a waterproof camera or phone, or a good quality waterproof case. You can also put a smaller camera in the waterproof back pack. These are very solid and dependable.

What if the weather changes during an outing?

We do not attempt to paddle too far away from the ship - the emphasis is on experiencing the destination rather than travelling long distances. Your guide will be in constant radio contact with our ship captain and expedition leader and if we need to return to the ship a Zodiac can be called.

What about paddling in swell?

The inflatable paddle boards are stable but in the event that wind chop or swell make paddling uncomfortable, your guide will cancel the outing or transfer boards and paddlers to a protected shoreline.

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance, including emergency evacuation coverage, is mandatory on all Aurora Expeditions voyages. You will need to ensure that your insurance policy covers you for your activity and any related equipment. An additional policy or premium may be required to ensure you have adequate coverage. Please contact Aurora Expeditions if you need assistance with your insurance policy.

For more information please contact your travel agent, or Aurora Expeditions on:

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