



## HELLO FROM ROTHERA!

Hello from the 2020 Rothera Winter team and congrats on your new job/ being rehired. We've heard life back home is particularly weird at the moment... it's only as weird as usual here, so you're coming to the right place!

We're halfway ish through winter now and we're writing to give you some helpful hints about what to bring and what to expect, based on what we've learnt so far. We hope you find it useful. If you've got any questions at all about life on station, please do get in touch- you can email me, Emma Edwards (Winter Station Leader) on [rwbc@bas.ac.uk](mailto:rwbc@bas.ac.uk). It's also a really good idea to get in contact with the person/people you'll be replacing; they were in your shoes a year ago and can give you all the specifics to make preparing a bit easier. Let me know which job you're coming down to do and I'll put you in touch.

You'll soon face the daunting task of packing for up to 18 months in Antarctica. Don't worry- BAS provide everything you need to live at Rothera, you could *almost* turn up in your underwear and know you would survive. But bringing the right stuff with you will make life here more comfortable, so we've put together some tips on what's already available and what's worth bringing. A lot of people feel that they packed too much when they came south; it's worth thinking carefully about what you'll really need, and drop us a line if you're unsure or need some advice.

### Shipping your stuff...

This year, things will be different to normal as we're expecting all winterers to sail down from the UK on the James Clark Ross, which means you won't have the normal restrictions of commercial flights. That said, things change frequently and at short notice, so we'd advise that you never get too attached to a plan! We're not sure exactly how your baggage allowances will work in the COVID era, but the Polar Operations Support Team will let you know. You'd normally have the following:

- Your own personal luggage, usually determined by airline baggage allowances
- BAS Kitbag which you'll collect from clothing stores and carry south, containing work and field kit- you'll probably need some of the cold weather kit from this for your journey down by ship
- P-box (P for personal), which is a big plastic trunk (800x500x500mm) for you to fill with personal items, usually consigned as cargo on the ship, so you won't be able to access it until you get here
- 65 Litre Personal Kitbag, issued by BAS for you to fill with your own clothes, also usually consigned to the ship as cargo
- Optional Ski/ Snowboard Bag

People normally use the P-box to bring down a selection of toiletries, sweets, extra clothes, ski gear, books - anything that won't fit in your normal luggage and you won't need urgently. Your P-Box and bag will travel from the UK to Rothera as ship's cargo, so will experience both the heat of the tropics and the freezing cold of the Antarctic- worth bearing this in mind if you have any temperature sensitive luggage (musical instruments, hard-drives, chocolate!)

The HR Team will be in touch to let you know what can and can't go in your box (no alcohol, aerosols or lithium batteries) and how to get your P-box to Cambridge. The packing deadline is usually mid-August, so give them a nudge if it's getting close.



## What to bring...

### Food

While you're south, your day to day food requirements will be catered for. If you have any special requirements please let the HR team know - but also feel free to get in touch directly with us at Rothera. The Chefs here work really hard, providing delicious food at least three times a day, and plenty of it!

There are snacks around station, including sweets, chocolate bars, nuts and a fridge full of cheese and leftovers... but most people bring some little luxuries of their own to enjoy over winter, such as:

- Chewing gum, sweets and mints
- Special chocolates like Toblerone, Green and Blacks, Forero Roche, Lindt etc. (Don't bother bringing Cadbury's chocolate- we've got loads!)
- Special biscuits like chocolate fingers, chocolate hobnobs or luxury shortbread
- Speciality teas or coffees, a cafetière or Aeropress, maybe some coffee syrup
- Homemade jam, special honey etc.
- Chutneys, pickles or hot sauces



We don't get much in the way of fresh fruit and veg over winter, so some people bring multivitamins, dried fruit or 'healthy' snacks.

### Clothes

#### *Outdoors:*

All your essential outdoor clothing will be supplied by BAS, plus suitable protective clothing to do your job, but if there's a particular bit of kit you know you're comfortable working in, it's worth bringing your own. A lot of people would recommend Cahartt work trousers or overalls (alternative brands include Dri Duck/ Berne/ Walls, according to Google/ Bing/ Yahoo).

In summer, people run around the runway perimeter and play football (and occasionally quidditch) on the hangar apron, which is a hard gravelly surface. So bring a light windproof top, sunhat and trainers if you're keen (your outdoor trainers will get quite dusty, so it's best to bring a separate indoor pair for the gym).

For running on the snow, we'd recommend some trail running shoes with really good grip, plus a small running backpack to carry extra layers.

#### *Indoors:*

It's about 20°C inside most of the buildings, so for the evenings and weekends bring t-shirts, shorts, jeans; the sort of clothing you'd wear at home. Clothes wear out pretty quickly in the industrial washers and dryers, so bring plenty. People generally dress very casually, but put a little bit more effort in on a Saturday evening (collared polo, shirt, nice blouse or dress), don't worry about this at all- anything goes, but it can be nice to dress up every now and then. And don't forget to bring a formal outfit (shirt/suit/tie/dress) for Midwinters day and Christmas.



Bring plenty of indoor shoes, so that you can leave a pair in each of the buildings you live and work in; we'd recommend at least three pairs of slippers/ crocs/ sandals/ trainers that you can slip on and off easily so you don't spend half your life changing your shoes.

Themed nights are very popular, especially in the winter, so if you have any fancy dress outfits it's well worth bringing them. Consumables, such as face paints and make-up, are a good idea as we go through a fair amount of these.

There are a few personal items that we'd recommend bringing:

- Your own woolly hat (one that keeps your ears warm too) – when everyone is in orange suits and goggles it will make you more recognisable.
- A couple of pairs of extra sunglasses– UV cat 4.
- A spare watch or watch battery ( a watch with an alarm is really useful)
- LOTS of underwear and socks, as they tend to wear out quite quickly. Top tip: pack some new socks and underwear that you can open in winter, it feels great to have some fresh new stuff after 6 months or so.
- For those with small hands consider bringing your own work gloves.
- One or two sets of your own thermals, as the standard issue ones can be a strange fit.
- For Tech Services and Vehicles Team, it might be worth bringing own work wear/boots for inside – comfortable stuff rather than new.

## Toiletries

BAS provide the essentials including sunscreen, toothpaste, toothbrushes, floss, shampoo, shower gel, basic disposable razors, unscented hand moisturiser etc. but if you like a particular brand you might want to bring your own. Items classed as non-essential are not supplied and these include deodorant and hair conditioner.

Simple painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen are available, but it's good to have a small supply of your own too, to make sure we don't run out.

Hair clippers with a variety of guards are provided. Consider bringing a hairdryer if you have long hair or might grow your hair, -20°C with a damp head isn't pleasant.

Some things we'd recommend bringing are:

- Conditioner/ hair products
- Comb/ brush/ hairbands/ clips
- Beard/ Moustache wax/ oil
- Deodorant (preferably roll-on as aerosols are classed as hazardous for shipping, so can't go in your P-Box and are a pain to deal with as waste)
- Electric toothbrush
- Cotton Buds
- Nail clippers
- Technical services/Garage – we have some barrier creams but you might want to bring your own, it's a very dry environment down here.
- Face Moisturiser/Hand cream





If you need any medications, make sure you bring enough for your whole time south (plus some spare just in case plans change a bit!)

*Extra note for female winterers- Gents, would advise you skip to the next section:*

Remember you have to supply all your female hygiene products for the whole year (you will be reimbursed if you take the receipt to HR). There are a few items here, but it's worth bringing your preferred brands.

The darkness in winter has been known to affect hormone cycles, so bring more than you think is necessary just in case. For ease, several of the female winterers can recommend a reusable cup such as Mooncup, Femmecup or Ziggycup (but worth bringing some disposable products as well, as they're much easier to deal with when you're out camping).

Toilet arrangements on recreation trips can be interesting for ladies, there are few (read: no) trees to hide behind in snow and with wind chills below  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$ , stripping off to pull your thermals down can be an 'emotional' (read: awful) experience, therefore many female winterers recommend a female urination device such as Shewee, Gogirl, or Wizz freedom.

### Bedroom Things

All the necessary bedroom linen is provided; towels, sheets, pillows, single duvets, etc. Accommodation is in twin ensuite rooms in Admirals House. You'll usually have a roommate over summer but have the room to yourself over winter, and people often bring a few things to make them feel more at home, for example:

- Your own duvet cover
- Fake plants
- Photos/ posters for noticeboards
- Your own pillow if you're fussy!
- Fairy lights
- Small Bluetooth speaker
- Your own mug (some people bring several for dining room, workplace etc.)
- Top tip: the shower curtains here are white/cream. Someone brought down a jungle print shower curtain that transformed their shower experience!



### Glasses and Contact Lenses

If you wear glasses, bring a spare pair (or two) and some spare screws – replacements are tricky to find in the middle of winter. A hard case is also recommended, and a couple of lens cloths and cleaner.

During the winter, when goggles are needed outside, glasses can steam up quickly so contact lenses are very useful. Monthly wear ones work well. Dailies are the easiest to use, albeit not the cheapest option. On field trips people have used disposable contact lenses; we have found that contact lenses and solution have been ok to use even after they have been frozen (although we're not sure what the official line on this would be if you asked an optician!)

Category 4 Sunglasses are provided as part of your kit, but we'd recommend bringing a spare pair of your own. If you wear prescription glasses, then BAS will make a contribution towards a pair of prescription sunglasses, and it's worth arranging this well in advance.



BAS will provide ski goggles; they are a “one size fits all” item, so if you feel like you will want to spend a lot of time outside then it may be worth buying a set you know are comfy.

## Computers and Phones

### Computers:

There are 8 general use PCs in New Bransfield House, plus PCs in most work areas. All PCs are networked and linked to the internet via satellite- at best, the Rothera link is about 25 times slower than a broadband link back home, and that’s shared across the whole station. E-mail and web browsing work well, but anything involving video or streaming is generally only workable at very quiet times over winter and won’t match the performance you may be used to back home. Video calling is sometimes possible over winter, but phoning, email and sending photos are much more dependable ways of keeping in touch, and its best to make sure your family know what to expect.

Most people bring their own laptop. These can be connected to the network and internet via an Ethernet cable in most buildings. Network cables are provided, however most modern laptops will require you to bring a USB to Ethernet adapter. Wireless internet isn’t available in summer, and is limited to certain buildings in winter.

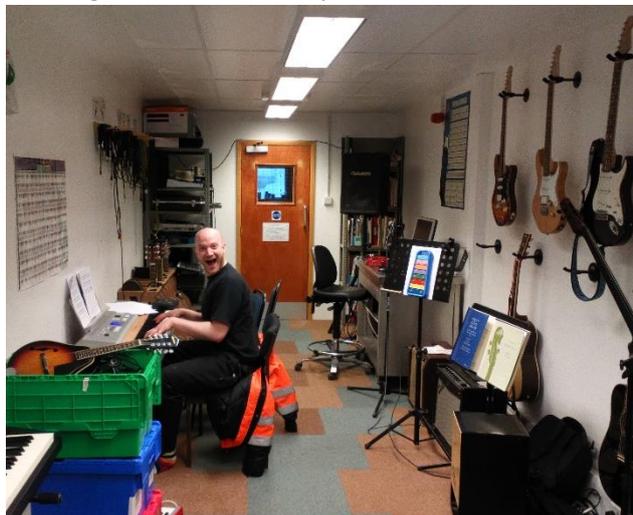
Even if you don’t bring your own laptop, it’s worth investing in an external hard drive to store your digital photos, files, music and videos. If you’ll be spending a lot of time in the field then have a think about your power/storage requirements for your MP3 player or digital camera, some people bring bring a 12V cigarette charger to charge devices from a skidoo. Power banks are very useful too.

### Phones:

There are two public phone booths where you can make calls in private, plus phones in most offices and work areas. Internal calls to Cambridge and other stations and ships are free. For personal calls to the UK, we usually make a quick call and ask the person to phone back- they just get charged as if they were calling within the UK. For international calls you need a phone card- more info will be given on these at pre-deployment training. It’s best to sort this out before you come south as buying anything online from here can be a frustrating business, but don’t worry if you don’t do so it is certainly possible to arrange from Rothera.

## Indoor recreation at Rothera...

Rothera’s communal areas are well kitted out with a pool table, darts board, table tennis, table football and lots of board games and cards. It is a good idea to bring things like fancy dress, card games, murder mystery nights etc. (If you are thinking of bringing your favourite game check with us first in case it is here already). Be imaginative now while you have access to the real world and you’ll reap the benefits- we’re pretty good



at keeping ourselves entertained and you definitely get out what you put in over winter!

### Music

The station has a good selection of music in various formats, however new music is warmly welcomed!

There is generally a thriving music scene here with bands forming in the summer and winter. If you are a musician then definitely bring your instrument. If you fancy learning, then bring one as it’s a great opportunity to learn. We have several electric and acoustic guitars, a drum kit, a keyboard, and amps. If you are bringing a wooden instrument of any value, pack it well and invest in a humidifier for the



case as the dry atmosphere here causes problems. New songbooks and sheet music are always appreciated.

### Books Films and TV

The station has a substantial collection of films and TV series in various formats...new additions to the collection are very welcome.

There's a good library on station but new, non-fiction and good quality novels are always appreciated and great to share around. If you enjoy reading e-books make sure you remember to pack an e-reader with its connection cable.

### Gym

Rothera has an acceptable gym (converted old food bays!) with the following equipment:

- Free weights
- Swiss balls
- Exercise bike
- 2 Concept II rowing machines
- 2 running machines
- Cross trainer
- Multi-gym
- Punch bag & mitts (mostly large)
- Skipping ropes/Resistance bands

We'd recommend bringing wireless headphones for the gym, maybe a sports drinks bottle and any protein/ energy powder/supplements that you might want to use.



### Arts and Crafts

There's a craft room on station (converted old pit room!) with various supplies and equipment, including a sewing machine, but would definitely bring your own paints/pencils/ materials etc. if you've got a particular project in mind. There's also a selection of wool and knitting needles, but again, bring your own if you're keen. Crafting is popular especially on bad weather days, and people who've never taken an interest before often find themselves getting creative- especially when there's a fancy dress night looming!

### Outside recreation at Rothera...

There are lots of opportunities for outdoor recreation at Rothera regardless of your ability level. There's a 14km flagged circuit from station onto the glacier opposite, which we're free to roam around in, plus more technical areas close by, where the field guides put on organised trips. The station has stocks of equipment and most people don't bring any extra equipment with them for outdoor recreation, but if you are particularly keen to take part in certain activities it might be worth bringing your own kit.



## Ski-ing and Snowboarding

One of the best recreational activities here at Rothera is the snow sports. Once you're up on the glacier the station disappears and the vastness of Antarctica hits you in the face! There's downhill ski-ing and snowboarding at Vals, the Ramp and Stork Bowl, ski mountaineering/ telemarking and cross country ski-ing around the flag line.

Rothera is not the best place in the world to learn to ski or snowboard (we don't employ instructors or groom pistes), but every year lots of people are introduced to snow sports here.

The station has a reasonable selection of skis, bindings, boots and a couple of split boards, but they're often in high demand and if you've got your own it's definitely worth bringing them. **Please note that with the exception of 3-pin Nordic bindings, if you're bringing your own skis they must have releasable bindings.**

It can be worthwhile bringing your own skiing/boarding clothing too as your own outdoor clothing may be a better fit than the BAS clothing.

There is occasional opportunities for kite ski-ing, so if you have your own kit then consider bringing it, but we wouldn't recommend buying anything specifically to use here.



## Climbing and Mountaineering

Rothera has a small indoor climbing wall and a selection of rock shoes but bring your own if you have them. We have lots of basic mountaineering equipment, but do bring your own mountaineering clothing if you have it; you might find your clothing system a better fit than the clothing BAS provide which is essentially for work purposes rather than mountaineering.

**For Field Guides:** There are four basic lead racks consisting of 1 set of nuts 1-11, DMM Dragon cams 1-4, 5 short extenders, 4 x BD turbo express 16cm screws. If you are going to bring any mountaineering kit, we would advise you to bring your own harness, helmet and belay device. We have loads of pitons, slings and screwgates. There are a few half ropes, lots of single ropes, plenty of helmets, mountaineering harnesses and 12 point mountaineering crampons. We have 4 pairs of DMM Flies but you might want to give these to the people you're taking out. For winter and deep field use we have 6000m and 8000m



boots but you can often get away with a regular 'Scottish winter' boots in summer. We have lots of plastic Scarpa Vegas and similar but if you have your own leather or synthetic mountaineering boots they are definitely worth bringing, especially for summer.

There is some climbing within easy reach of the station. Most of the rock is loose and protection can be marginal, but there are occasional gems such as Sundog's Wall E1 5b, 40 metres of quality granite and Gosmark's Gully a one pitch IV, 5 ice route. There's a local guide book with rock routes up to E2 and winter routes to Scottish VI.



If you have any questions about outdoor/kites/skiing/mountaineering equipment then please give the Field Guides an email on [rfga@bas.ac.uk](mailto:rfga@bas.ac.uk) and they will be happy to answer your query.

## Photography

If you don't already have some, consider investing in some decent camera equipment. You'll usually be given a talk on photography as part of pre-deployment training and have the chance to ask detailed questions- but we've got quite a few enthusiastic photographers on station at the moment who will be happy to offer advice too.

### *Digital SLR and compact cameras:*

Almost everyone brings a digital camera south – the question is what kind? A compact camera is easy to carry around and convenient for mountaineering/skiing and SLRs are more expensive, heavy and bulkier but give you full manual control. The choice is yours and there are definite advantages to having both. Most people tend to have Nikon, Canon and Olympus digital SLRs, the standard of digital SLRs these days is high and most makes are more than likely to be suitable. As for compact cameras, there are loads of great ones on the market which for most of the time will do the job (the clumsy among us recommend bringing a backup for the one you'll inevitably drop!)

Many of the public PCs have card readers for downloading from digital cameras, there's an A4 and A3 sized photographic printers. Bring your own photo grade paper as not much is provided.

### *Film:*

We have film darkroom facilities and the station provides chemicals for black-and-white developing and printing. Bring plenty of film and photographic paper if you're interested.

### *Video cameras:*

If you're serious about video, bring your own laptop, editing software and become familiar with it before you leave the UK. As mentioned already, bring plenty of hard drive space as most people do run out of this. If you plan to do lots of shooting with sound note that Antarctica can be very windy, consider buying an external microphone with a fluffy windshield.

### *Essential spares:*

For all forms of photography you'll need to have a spare battery (rechargeable), the cold sucks the charge out of the battery quick so it's essential to have a second battery. Bring plenty of memory cards with you and a good camera bag/case is a must, particularly for long winter trip skidoo journeys. For serious photography a good quality tripod is essential, the light begins to fade rapidly after the summer season ends and it's the only way to properly capture the stunning Rothera winter sunsets and weird clouds. Think about whether you want to insure your camera equipment but note that a lot of companies won't insure for Antarctica (i.e. read the small print!). Remote control release, flash guns, UV and polarising filters are also useful.

## Post Office and Shop...

Rothera runs its own post office. Stamps and postcards are available, as well as first day covers. The shop has a selection of BAS Rothera T-shirts and other merchandise on sale- although resupply will be limited this year so keep your expectations low! There is plenty of stationery in stock so there is no need to bring envelopes or writing paper, but some organised people bring a supply of cards

Receiving post down here is very exciting (so I'm told- my mother's never got the hint) so tell your friends and family to send lots of letters and postcards. They can send it to the Falklands Islands Office and it will get sent on to Rothera by ship or plane. The address is:

For Rothera Research Station  
British Antarctic Survey



Stanley  
Falkland Island  
South Atlantic  
FIQQ 1ZZ

Postal deliveries are few and far between and heavy parcels will always be moved bottom of the list, but worst case scenario is that your post will arrive on the ship you are going to leave on and you get to open it before you go home! Always ensure parcels are less than 2kg or they will go 'land' mail to the Falklands which can take 6 months. If your family/friends want to make sure you have a parcel for Christmas or your birthday, the safest way is to give it to you, either to put in your p-box or to travel with you.

## Other things to think about before you head South...

### Money

You don't need any money on station – anything you buy is deducted from your pay each month through a personal account transfer. However a credit card is useful in the Falklands and a few US dollars / Euros can be handy if you want to buy from the occasional visiting tourist ship.

### Websites and Blogs

It is possible to maintain a web presence while wintering, but the slow connection speed can make setting up a website difficult. If you think you would like to blog about your experiences, or just upload a couple of photographs every now and then, it is a good idea to prepare in advance (not least so you can give the web address to friends and family!)

### Legal and Banking

It is worthwhile considering giving a relative power of attorney in case you have to arrange banking or legal matters whilst at Rothera. They can then act on your behalf in all matters. It is a small trouble while you're in the civilized world, and will save you a lot of fuss.

If you rely on two-factor authentication (2FA) codes via SMS for any online accounts, either: switch to an offline tool (e.g. Google Authenticator, PIN Sentry) or have 2FA codes sent to an accessible email address before leaving the UK. Otherwise, disable 2FA entirely because SMS cannot be received in Antarctica.

Internet banking requires superhuman patience in the summer, so best to make sure everything is in order by the time you leave the UK. Same thing for your tax situation.

We'd recommend you make a reminder summary of all your login/password/card codes information, which you won't have much use for down here but will be really helpful for your future self when you arrive back home- don't underestimate the Antarctic dementia.

### Travelling home

Check your bank/credit cards will still be in date for your return trip, especially if you might want to travel.

Take your driving licence with you if you want to hire a car in the Falklands, South America and for your return to the UK.

Either bring or send down things you might need for your travels, such as backpacks, walking boots, sleeping bags, and warm weather clothes.

Make sure you have any vaccinations and inoculations you might need for your trip.

Choose your travel insurance carefully- a lot of policies have to begin from the time you leave the UK, not the time you leave Antarctica.



## ANY QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions or need some advice then please feel free to contact me Emma Edwards at [rwbc@bas.ac.uk](mailto:rwbc@bas.ac.uk) and I'll see if I can answer your query. If not, then I can direct you to the relevant person on station or at Cambridge HQ.

Enjoy your last few days/weeks/months in the UK with friends and family and we look forward to seeing you when you arrive. Have a great journey down!

### *Emma Edwards and the Rothera 2020 Winter Team*



**From left to right:**

- Steve Ward- Plant Operator
- Joe Marlow- Marine Biologist
- Matt Conroy- Electrician
- Tom Lambert- Carpenter
- Dave Knight- Building Labourer
- Rob Taylor- Field Guide
- Jack Farr- Meteorologist
- Rupert Johnson (on floor)- Dive Officer
- Daze Routledge- Field Guide
- Andy Stevenson-Jones- Electronics Engineer
- Tom Hammond (peeking from back)- Vehicles Mech
- Ryan Kaempfe- Plumber
- Emma Edwards- Winter Station Leader

- Ross Bingham (on floor)- Vehicles Mech
- Dan McKenzie- Plumber
- Emma Bolton- Marine Assistant
- Mac Elliott (at back)- Genny Mech
- Mark 'Big Chief' Porter- Plumber/ Deputy WSL
- Sam Hunt- Field Guide
- Rob Miller- IT Engineer
- Sasha Doyle- Field Guide
- Adam Lowndes (at back, facing wrong way)- Carpenter
- Sarah Crowsley- Field Guide
- Ollie Hooper (at back)- Chef/ aspiring model
- Cary/ Gazza Jackson- Carpenter
- James Bowyer- Doctor
- Sam Liscoe- Boating Officer