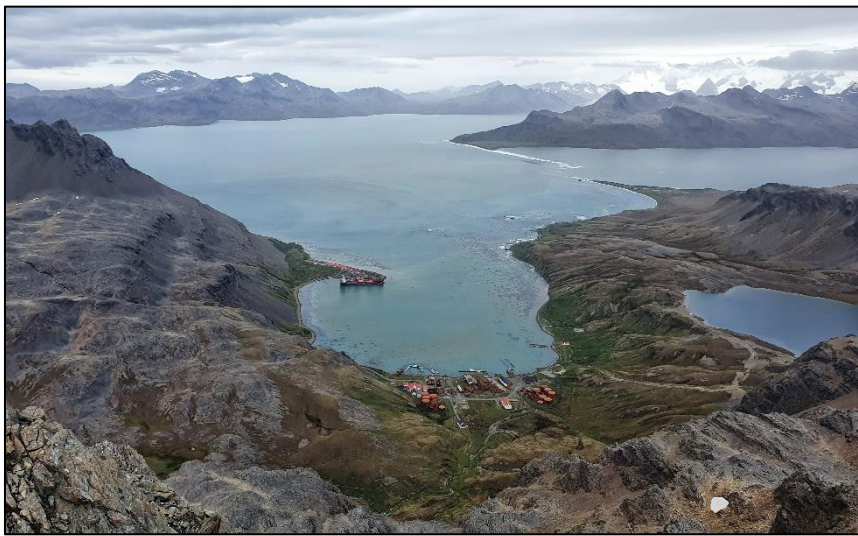


HELLO FROM THE KEP WINTERING TEAM

Hello from the BAS team wintering at King Edward Point (Fran, Kat, Dee, Kate, Meghan, Charlie, Dave, Martin and Ross). Our island home is a beautiful place of mountains, boating, wildlife, sun, snow, visitors, isolation and history. We have had an interesting season with the wharf project all done and dusted, then Coronavirus. This latter has had repercussions which will last into next season – fewer people will be coming south and Grytviken will be closed to tourists.

This letter is intended to give you some useful info to help with your preparations and packing for coming to South Georgia. It contains bits and pieces we found valuable or wish we'd been told prior to heading south. If you have any other queries please don't hesitate to get in touch with Fran, Station Leader at kpbc@bas.ac.uk.



Looking down onto Grytviken and King Edward Point from the summit of Hodges.

Station Life and People

One of the things that is quite different about KEP is that it isn't just a BAS base. In fact BAS manage the station on behalf of SG Government and that means that there are plenty of non BAS people living and working here. We normally have two South Georgia Government Officers and their partners at KEP at any one time. They live in Carse House and Shackleton Villa and cook for themselves. Likewise the Government Build team come down every summer season and live out of Larsen, again they cook for themselves but quite often come over the Everson Bar or for a Saturday night meal. Over at Grytviken, one kilometre away along the track to the head of King Edward Cove, is the old whaling station which now has a Museum, Post Office, shop and accommodation in Drukken Villa for the South Georgia Heritage Trust staff and volunteers. Their work is with the cruise ships who bring passengers to the heritage sites of South Georgia. We often get invitations onto the cruise ships and you are strongly recommended to take advantage of these opportunities. Visiting scientists come down for stretches in the summer, some working out of Cook Labs, others independent of KEP.

Packing allowance and timings

Make sure to read your travel documents carefully and make a note of the luggage allowance. The MOD flights from Brize Norton are not flexible with their baggage limits and will make you leave things behind if you are over the maximum weight. However, the baggage limit is much greater than on a commercial flight – in previous years it has been two bags totalling no more than 56kg, plus one piece of hand luggage of 8kg, but double-check this before packing your bags!

In addition, you will have a cargo allowance to send down on one of the BAS ships. This will consist of a 'P-box' (a hard, plastic crate approx. 80x50x45cm) and a soft holdall for clothes and unbreakable items. DON'T put Lithium batteries in your P-box. You can also consign a ski bag or musical instrument on the ship but make sure these are well packaged. The cargo loading deadline for the ship varies, in recent years it has needed to be packed, labelled, and delivered to BAS Cambridge by 1st August, **so check your dates**.

Biosecurity is taken very seriously on South Georgia. You will have to go through your cargo and prove it is clean before it is allowed on station so before you pack it, especially any outdoor gear, make sure it is free from dirt, seeds or any other potentially invasive species.

Communications

We have a limited internet connection supplied by satellite link (maximum 1Mbps, usually much less), which supports all the base phones, internet use and science data. To give you an idea of speed, it is approximately 6% of your average home broadband speed and has to support up to 50 devices, more when it is busy in the summer. The connection is also liable to drop out during poor weather.

To manage the internet this year (2019-20) we have done two things:

1. Installed Wi-Fi in all accommodation blocks – Everson, Disco, Larsen, Drukken Villa, Carse House and Shack Villa – and made it accessible by password which is input direct into your mobile device by the SL or other designated person. This means people have access to What's App, Messenger, Facebook, Instagram and personal email through their phones.
2. Restricted access for laptops by disabling LAN ports in the pit rooms. Laptops are the biggest drain on our internet – if you need to connect to the internet with a laptop you can use the available ports in Cook Lab Conference Room (no Wi-Fi in Cook Lab). As winterers you will also have your own office and work station which is connected to the internet.

The phone system works over the Internet and can often have a significant delay. For personal calls you should use a phone card (Tesco or White Calling), or get the person to call you back. We do have a personal phone call log book if you don't choose these options – just record your calls and they will be deducted from your personal account.

The government run a Post Office at King Edward Point and mail is collected and delivered roughly every six weeks. (There is also a Post Office and Museum shop at Grytviken stocked with gifts but it won't be open this coming season). Getting packages sent from the UK can be expensive (£20 for up to 2kg, much more over that weight), but letters and cards are cheap and a joy to receive – encourage friends and family to get writing and be prepared to send postcards yourself.

Postal address:

British Antarctic Survey, King Edward Point, South Georgia, via Falkland Islands, SIQQ 1ZZ

Legal and banking

Internet banking is possible using phone apps so get them set up before you go. Be aware that two stage authentication and OTPs (One Time Passcodes) DON'T work – anything that tries to send you a text message basically, there is no mobile reception here! Don't forget your card reader. It is also worth thinking about setting up telephone banking.

Ensure that your bank/credit cards and passport are not going to expire while you are south, especially if you might want to travel on your way home.

Consider giving a relative power of attorney in case you have to arrange banking or legal matters whilst at KEP. It is a small trouble while you're in the civilized world and will save you a lot of fuss while down here. Another thing to consider is the setting up of a proxy vote for any elections or referendums whilst you are away.

Food

There is no chef at King Edward Point so we all get our turn on the cooking rota. This can be quite daunting if you've never cooked for a group before but there will be plenty of recipe books and people to lend a hand and even if you only specialise in two or three dishes that'll be enough to see you through.



Most of our food arrives at first call around the end of November. As you'd expect it's mostly dried, tinned or frozen but we get regular deliveries of fresh(ish) vegetables from the fishery patrol vessel Pharos. There is a wide range of food in our stores but luxury items including crisps and chocolate are in short supply and rationed. You won't go hungry and will no doubt discover a whole new range of culinary ideas.

Popular personal extras include sweets and chocolate, speciality teas & coffees, unusual herbs & spices, or favourite cooking books. Hot sauce is always a winner! If you have any questions about food, please get in contact.



KEP has a well-stocked food store!

Drink

King Edward Point has a characterful bar and wide selection of alcoholic and soft drinks at reasonable prices. **Bringing your own alcohol is not permitted.** A tick-sheet system is used for payment with purchases deducted from your personal account shown on your monthly payslip. While the bar is a great place for socialising BAS has a strict alcohol policy and all members of station are expected to be able to muster and respond in an emergency.



Clothing

BAS kitbags

You will be provided with a basic clothing kitbag with all the essentials (overalls, outdoor clothing, boots). Make sure you take your time to try out all the items when you're getting kitted out at Cambridge in September. Everything needs to fit properly – historically this is a bit of a rushed process but if you don't get it right in the first place you're stuck for a year with uncomfortable clothes.

Additional outdoor clothing

There is a very limited field store on site and you are unlikely to be able to supplement your clothing from it. How much extra outdoor clothing you bring will largely depend on how you intend spending your free time, but the following should be considered:

- Thermals and socks: extras of these are worth bringing (especially Merino wool underlayers). Most people wish they had brought more socks.
- Lightweight waterproof jacket & trousers: The Paramo jacket and salopettes provided by BAS are excellent but can be a bit warm for summer so you'll want to bring some lightweight waterproof trousers and a lightweight waterproof jacket as well.
- Hiking trousers: BAS doesn't provide you with hiking trousers in your kit bag (with the exception of the 2 scientists) so you will need to bring a couple of pairs of your own.
- Down/Primaloft Jacket: A synthetic Primaloft type jacket or a medium-weight down jacket are excellent for huts and lunch stops while out on the hill. If you want something fancy look in Tiso or Craigdon, or if you are looking for something more basic Decathlon have a good selection.
- Gaiters: it can be wet and boggy on the hills.
- Footwear: Meindl boots are provided in your kitbag and are very good outdoor boots. However, the scree on South Georgia is very harsh on boots so if you think you'll do a lot of walking (most people do) you might want to bring a second pair of boots yourself. Ensure they have good ankle support and a vibram sole. Winter mountaineering boots are ideal.
- Sunglasses: These are provided by BAS in your kit bag but they are Cat 4s only. You should bring at least one pair of Cat 3 polarising sunglasses, especially for boating as the BAS-supplied Cat 4 aren't much use when driving boats and trying to read navigation screens.
- Gloves: These are supplied in your kitbags, but you might want an extra pair of winter-weight gloves for winter months. It's always good to have an extra pair in case one gets wet.
- Sun-hat: in the early summer (November to December) we get very high levels of UV and it's easy to get sunburned.
- Running shoes: KEP offers some fantastic fell running opportunities and we hold an annual half marathon. The terrain is quite demanding so a good pair of running shoes are worthwhile. (Even if you don't think you'll tackle the half-marathon you'll want a pair of trainers for the gym.) If you are a keen runner you might want to consider a pair of fell running shoes.
- Wellies: There is a limited supply of wellies in our field store. If you have small feet you might struggle to find a pair that fit so you may wish to bring your own. South Georgia has quite a wet climate so you'll be glad of them on those rainy days!



Walkers, Runklers and Runners for the 2019 South Georgia Half Marathon

Other useful outdoor items

- Rucksacks: For day trips, we have some new 45L Montane rucksacks which are very good. For longer trips, we have plenty of large MacPac 60-80 litre rucksacks which are a good size but very heavy and bulky. We would strongly recommend that you bring your own larger rucksack for multi-day trips, ideally a 60-80 litre one. If you have a favourite 30-40 litre rucksack of your own you might also want to bring that.
- There are plenty of down sleeping bags (Rab Atlas and Ladakh goose down) but again they are very bulky hence the need to a bigger-than-normal rucksack when you go on holiday. If you already have your own warm sleeping bag that packs down very small, you might want to bring it with you for your summer trips but it isn't essential.
- Thermarests are also provided but are bulky. If you have your own very light-weight one you want to bring it for camping/bivvy trips.
- Bring some good quality lightweight dry-bags to keep kit in your rucksack dry. Very handy for cameras and lenses and spare clothes.
- Ice axes and crampons: These are also supplied but they are rather old and showing their age. Bringing your own crampons and ice axes is recommended this year, while we wait for the Field Store kit to be updated. A single mountaineering axe is fine (don't bother with technical tools, you won't get the use out of them). If you choose to bring a second pair of boots, a pair of winter mountaineering boots would be ideal to use in winter months with crampons.
- Thermos mug: A small thermos mug for taking a hot drink into the hills with you is very useful. There are some on base, but a very limited number.
- Goggles: Ski goggles are really useful on windy and snowy days. There are some on base but a very limited number. If you have your own, bring them!
- **Note that the following items are all provided at KEP so there is no need to purchase them:** bivvy bags, bothy bags, walking poles (new in 2020), snowshoes, mountaineering helmets, handheld GPS (very old Etrex 10 model), compasses (new in 2020), head torches and whistles. For winter travel we also have transceivers (old Tracker models), shovels and probes.

Personal indoor clothing

The station is well heated and you shouldn't need anything significantly different to what you'd wear in the UK. Some items you might want to consider:

- Depending on your job, possibly hard-wearing trousers for outdoor work.
- Slippers, sandals, crocs, or other indoor-only footwear when wandering around inside. It's worth having a couple of pairs for the different buildings.
- Plenty of socks, these wear quickly here so bring more than you think you need.
- Smart clothes for Saturday evenings and formal occasions. Shirts and shoes, ties, nice dresses... it's good to mark the special occasions with a bit of scrubbing up.
- Shorts for summer and swimwear for the sauna.
- Some fancy dress stuff – face paints, hair dye, wigs, etc.



A typical KEP pitroom. Over Winter you will normally have a room to yourself.

Toiletries

The basics are supplied for you at KEP: soap, shampoo (but not conditioner), shaving foam/gel, disposable razors, toothbrushes, toothpaste, fluoride mouthwash, floss, aftersun and sun cream (factor 50). Basic lipsalve is also provided but it isn't great so you may want to bring your own. Also consider bringing: deodorant (no aerosols), moisturiser (no microplastics), decent razors and spare blades.

There is a basic supply of period products provided but if you have a preference you may want to bring your own. Eco-friendly alternatives like moon-cup or re-useable pads will take up less space in luggage, and save you from having to work out exactly how much to bring!

Bed linen, quilts, pillows and bathroom towels are also provided.

We have haircutting and beard-trimming clippers but you may want to bring your own, or just embrace your inner polar explorer and let your hair grow.

Skiing and snowboarding

Ski equipment

KEP can offer some superb skiing during the winter but it has an 'island climate' so do have realistic expectations. If you want to be able to take the opportunities as they arise then purchasing gear or shipping your existing kit down is a must – there are no skis nor snowboards for general use here at KEP. If you've never skied before it is best to try a few lessons at a snow dome before you leave.

There are no ski-lifts at KEP and you will have to earn your turns. You will need a touring set-up not a downhill skis and boots – all the skiing or boarding you will do is 'off-piste'. Some people love the cross-country skiing here but it is best suited to folk who already have experience of Nordic touring. The same goes for telemark skiing.

Ski Mountaineering

Alpine touring gear is very practical – it allows you to go uphill with a free heel and skins (which attach to the base of your skis and allow them to slide only forwards). When you plan to descend you remove the skins and lock down the heel of your ski boots which allows for a normal alpine downhill descent.

In addition to skis you will need to bring:

- Skins
- Ski crampons
- Ski helmet (as from this coming season ski helmets will be compulsory)

If you are buying from new, it's essential to get your boots fitted properly in a shop, although the rest of the kit you could buy mail-order.

Bear in mind that the packing deadline for cargo consigned to the ship is usually early and shops don't tend to hold a great stock of ski gear during the UK summer, so it is worth getting sorted as early as possible.

There are a few shops in the UK that specialize in touring skiing and who will be better placed to advise you than a standard ski shop.

- *Braemar Mountain Sports in Braemar (ask about a BAS discount)*
- *Cairngorm Mountain Sport in Aviemore (sister shop to the above)*
- *Backcountry in Ilkley, Yorkshire.*



Snowboards

Snowboards are an option, and split-boards are making access to the backcountry far easier for our tray-hugging friends.

Split boards are relatively new on the market and are rare in the UK. Typing 'split board forum' into Google will bring you to a dedicated site giving you an insight into what it's all about. Basically it's a board that has quick release bindings which splits down the centre to form skis, which can then have skins attached to allow you to skin up uphill sections and put an end to arduous boot packing.

Buying ski/boarder kit can be a significant investment and seem a bit confusing if you're new to it, don't hesitate to get in touch with any questions. Second hand gear may be a good option if you're

unsure how much skiing you'll do after leaving KEP. Ex-winterers are sometimes keen to sell their ski gear so get in touch if you're considering this.

It's worth bearing in mind that South Georgia is a very rocky place and if your skis leave without at least a few scrapes then you're probably not trying hard enough. Note that we have some kit for ski repair and tuning on station (scrapers, files, a range of ski waxes, skin adhesives etc.) but they haven't been replaced for years so we can't vouch for the quality!

Photography



Snowy day towards Harpon and the Lyell Glacier

The scenery and wildlife at South Georgia are spectacular. Many people spend a lot of money on a variety of cameras and it's common to wish they'd brought more rather than less, however there is no need to go crazy and spend excessive amounts.

Point & shoot vs SLR vs video

The best camera is the one you have with you at the time and many of the best shots are taken on compact, waterproof, shock-resistant cameras in the £100 - £200 region. If you're only bringing one camera this is the type to go for. While many camera-phones are very good quality these days, they are rarely rugged or battery-efficient.

SLRs are popular for the serious wildlife and scenery photographer, with Canon and Nikon the most common brands, though Sony, Olympus, Ricoh, Panasonic all make good quality models. Bridge cameras are becoming increasingly prevalent, offering many of the benefits of an SLR but with the affordability and portability of a compact.

Video cameras and GoPro-style action cameras are popular too, offering a whole new range of features and different ways of recording your experiences.

UAVs and drones are not allowed on South Georgia for anything but scientific and media purposes, which require licenses from BAS and the SG government. These are highly unlikely to be issued to individuals.

You will receive plenty of camera advice at pre-deployment training, but here is a selection of tips and advice:

Batteries	Bring at least 2 proven-brand batteries as the cold will quickly drain them. Video cameras and action cameras especially tend to have a battery life of a few hours at most.
Memory cards	You can now get cheap memory cards of very high capacity. Ideally buy 2 or 3 memory cards so at least if one fails you have a backup. Avoid cheap versions of memory cards and go for a reliable brand (SanDisk, Lexar, Fujifilm, etc).
External hard drive	Back up your photos regularly. At least one external hard drive is a small investment compared to the risk of losing all your pictures.

SLR lenses	The most used, apart from the standard kit lens, are a medium telephoto (70-200mm) and wide angle. The wildlife will usually approach to close enough to render a huge zoom redundant. Bring one if you have it but don't make buying one a priority.
Lens filter (for SLR)	A UV filter protects the lens front and circular polarising filters are occasionally useful. Consider a graduated filter to balance out the light; the difference in snow-capped peaks and the ground can be extreme.
Tripod	A reasonably sturdy one, although with tripods there is always a trade-off between portability and stability (i.e. make sure that you can carry it in your rucksack all day!)
Intervalometer	There are lots of opportunities for taking great time-lapse sequences at KEP. If your camera does not have the facility built in, then consider a 3 rd party intervalometer
Camera bag	There can be moisture condensation problems associated with taking a cold camera into a warm building but if you leave it in a camera bag for a few hours then it won't be a problem. It's also useful to have a couple of small desiccant bags, camera/lens cleaning stuff – blower, cleaning cloths.
Microphone	Video is a great way to record the life around South Georgia, especially as it captures evocative sounds. Consider a microphone attachment if you are thinking about videoing.
Editing software	Photo and video editing can take up a lot of time but is good to get it done early so you can share your images. There is some really good, expensive software out there (Adobe, Lightroom, Final Cut) but most computers come with free or cheap editing and cataloguing software that is suitable for the majority of needs.

Keeping busy

More exercise

We have a basic range of gym equipment including treadmill, bike, rower, weights multi-gym, free weights, and a set of gymnastic rings. There is also a punch bag and a couple of sets of gloves, badminton and table tennis equipment.

Libraries

There is an extensive selection of books, music, movies and TV programmes on station and you'll never be short of something new to discover. However new additions, especially new releases, are always welcome. We get regular releases of a range of magazines, though all a year behind their publishing date. New reading material is popular at smoko.



Screen 2 has a good supply of DVDs and books.

Slide shows

Lecture nights are always enjoyable. Sometimes a visiting scientist will talk about their work but everyone is welcome to talk about a passion of their own, maybe an inspiring holiday or former job. It is always interesting to find out what people did before coming to KEP so make sure you have some good photos of your past life.

Music

We have two acoustic guitars, an electric piano, a small guitar amplifier and a tin whistle on station. If you bring down your own instrument, or decide to learn / play what we have here there'll normally be someone up for a jam, no matter how awful it may sound.

Arts & crafts

Painting, knitting, woodwork, glass etching... the list of craft projects people have embarked on is long and diverse. Supplies on station are limited so make sure to pack anything you think you want to experiment with. One of the highlights of midwinter week is the exchange of gifts; there are some real gems of hand-crafted beauty created over the preceding month or two, often by people who never thought they could accomplish anything so complex. Specialist bits and pieces may be worth bringing down; clock mechanisms, mirrors, hinges etc.



The 2020 Mid-Winter Gifts

'I wish I'd thought of that...'

- Alarm clock.
- Pyjamas, dressing gown.
- More 'normal' clothes – depending on your job you might find you spend most of your time in jeans and a tshirt rather than full 'polar hero' outdoor gear.
- Spare watch and battery (consider waterproof for boating and outdoors)
- Money - pounds sterling and dollars can be useful for buying stuff on cruise ships (although there are unlikely to be any in the 2020-21 season). There is no cash point in the Falklands so carry enough for a few days travel each direction.
- Make sure your bank card lasts until you get back.
- Your favourite mug!

- Batteries for your electronic equipment to last a year. It's worthwhile taking your own rechargeable batteries, particularly AAA's and AA's; bring plenty as they don't last as long in the cold
- 2 external hard drives (recommend at least 1TB in capacity) for photos, video, films, music, backup, etc. plus USB pen drives are really handy for swapping photos and files.
- Binoculars if you are into wildlife (There are some at KEP but supplies are very limited.)
- Posters, photos, things for decorating your room
- Hay-fever medication. Station supplies are small and tussock pollen can be debilitating.
- Seasickness tablets if you are susceptible. BAS Ships will supply these but the Pharos does not. (If you aren't sure if you get seasick – assume that you do and bring tablets just in case!)
- Surprise treats to share with/bribe your fellow winterers
- Stuff for theme nights, murder/mystery nights, fancy dress
- Headphones, and spare headphones
- Kindle
- Head torch with red light / night vision is very useful for night boating especially
- Download all the programmes and apps you think you will need before you leave the UK as you will not be able to do it here
- Art and craft items such as pencils, paints, paintbrushes, wool, kneedles etc.
- Spare phone charging cables
- External battery pack for charging phones while on trips.
- Download the ViewRanger app onto your phone before you leave. It's a good way of recording all your walks and the basic map it has of South Georgia is surprisingly good.

If you have any questions about life at KEP then please get in touch at kpbc@bas.ac.uk

We look forward to seeing you here in a few months.

From all of us here at King Edward Point.