# Scotland hosts first joint UK and NZ Antarctic heritage VR tour



# Exploring Antarctic History Through Virtual Reality: A Unique Experience Comes to Scotland

Scotland is set to immerse itself in the remarkable legacy of Antarctic exploration with a cutting-edge virtual reality experience, now available at the Discovery Point Museum in Dundee. Running from May 8 to May 11, this special event allows visitors to engage with the rich heritage of one of the planet's most remote locations. This initiative represents a collaborative effort between two prominent heritage charities—the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust (UKAHT) and the New Zealand Antarctic Heritage Trust (NZAHT)—which are joining forces for the first time to present a public tour across both England and Scotland.

Visitors will have the chance to don VR headsets and virtually traverse historic Antarctic huts, interact with wildlife such as penguins, enjoy a simulated ride in a hydrogen balloon, and even feed huskies. These experiences aim to unveil the stories of survival and innovation that have shaped Antarctic science and exploration, bringing history to life in an interactive manner.

The virtual reality programme consists of two distinct experiences: **Immersive Antarctica: A Frozen Night** and the **Scott’s Discovery Hut**. The former, developed by UKAHT, provides a detailed reconstruction of a historic scientific base where participants step into the shoes of overwintering scientists, grappling with the unique challenges of their frigid environment. Camilla Nichol, CEO of UKAHT, commented on the significance of the program, noting, “A Frozen Night is UKAHT’s first virtual reality experience based on a true story from the archives and narrated by those who lived and worked in our southernmost base, Stonington Island.” Established in 1948, Stonington Island was crucial for early expeditions, enabling researchers to venture deeper into the Antarctic Peninsula.

The heritage sites curated by UKAHT, such as Base A at Port Lockroy and the wreck of Sir Ernest Shackleton's ship, Endurance, underscore Britain's pivotal role in the continent's exploratory history. The digitisation efforts initiated by UKAHT since 2019, involving laser scanning and photogrammetry, have been vital for conservation and storytelling, paving the way for innovative experiences like A Frozen Night.

From the New Zealand perspective, the NZAHT's VR experience focuses on Captain Robert Falcon Scott’s Discovery Hut, the first expedition base established on Ross Island in 1902. Francesca Eathorne, executive director of NZAHT, expressed enthusiasm over making the historic hut accessible to a global audience through VR technology, which allows users to interact with over 500 artifacts preserved inside. She stated, “It gives great insight into the everyday items the explorers had with them and how they used the hut to support the important science and exploration they undertook.”

The development of this immersive experience has been a significant undertaking, requiring over 1,000 hours of work by the NZAHT in collaboration with the New Zealand-based tech company StaplesVR. This partnership was essential for constructing a detailed digital reconstruction that enables visitors to explore the hut's interior while learning about the daily lives of early explorers.

The tour has been made possible through generous funding from The Charles Hayward Foundation and donations to NZAHT’s Inspiring Explorers™ Fund. This financial support not only facilitates the creation of the VR experiences but also helps raise awareness about the pressing need to preserve Antarctica's cultural heritage for future generations.

As this remarkable event unfolds at the Discovery Point Museum in Dundee, it presents a unique opportunity for Scots to reconnect with Antarctic history in a way that blends education with entertainment. The accessible nature of VR technology promises to foster a deeper appreciation of the challenges faced by early explorers and the scientific advances that have emerged from their endeavours in one of the most forbidding landscapes on Earth.

Tickets for this extraordinary VR experience are now available, offering a riveting glimpse into the past and the chance to witness Antarctic exploration like never before.

## Reference Map:

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* Paragraph 6 – [[2]](https://nzaht.org/share/virtual-reality-discovery-hut/), [[5]](https://www.ukaht.org/latest-news/2023/virtual-reality-will-transport-people-to-our-historic-bases/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[3]](https://nzaht.org/cutting-edge-discovery-hut-vr-experience-launched/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/scotland-now/virtual-reality-experience-brings-immersive-35192929> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://nzaht.org/share/virtual-reality-discovery-hut/> - The New Zealand Antarctic Heritage Trust offers a virtual reality experience of Captain Robert Falcon Scott's Discovery Hut, the first Antarctic base on Ross Island. This immersive tour allows users to virtually enter the historic hut, interact with artifacts, and learn about the daily lives of early explorers. The experience includes interactions such as riding in a hydrogen balloon, feeding huskies, and encountering penguins, providing insights into the challenges and innovations of Antarctic exploration. The project was developed in partnership with StaplesVR and aims to make Antarctic heritage accessible to a global audience.
3. <https://nzaht.org/cutting-edge-discovery-hut-vr-experience-launched/> - The New Zealand Antarctic Heritage Trust has launched a cutting-edge virtual reality experience of Scott's Discovery Hut, marking a significant advancement in sharing Antarctic history. Developed in collaboration with StaplesVR, the experience offers a detailed reconstruction of the hut, allowing users to explore its interior and interact with historical artifacts. The project involved over 1,000 hours of work and aims to provide an immersive insight into the lives of early Antarctic explorers, highlighting the hut's role in scientific research and exploration.
4. <https://nzaht.org/share/virtual-reality/antarctica-360-vr/> - The Antarctic Heritage Trust provides a series of 360° virtual reality videos that transport viewers to various Antarctic locations, including Port Lockroy, Half Moon Island, and Foyn Harbour. These immersive experiences allow users to virtually kayak in frozen waters, interact with penguins, and explore historic sites, offering a unique perspective on Antarctic wildlife and history. The videos are part of the Trust's initiative to make Antarctic exploration accessible to a wider audience through innovative digital media.
5. <https://www.ukaht.org/latest-news/2023/virtual-reality-will-transport-people-to-our-historic-bases/> - The UK Antarctic Heritage Trust (UKAHT) is developing 'Immersive Antarctica,' a virtual reality program that digitally reconstructs historic Antarctic bases, starting with Base E on Stonington Island. Collaborating with Anglia Ruskin University and ARU StoryLab, UKAHT aims to make Antarctic heritage accessible by allowing users to virtually explore these sites from their homes. The project utilizes archival records and data collected from the bases to create an immersive experience that brings the history of Antarctic exploration to life.
6. <https://www.ukaht.org/latest-news/2024/our-vr-project-goes-on-display-to-public-for-the-first-time/> - The UK Antarctic Heritage Trust's virtual reality project, 'Immersive Antarctica,' was publicly displayed for the first time at the Polar Museum in Cambridge. This VR experience digitally reconstructs Stonington Island as it appeared in the 1960s, allowing users to explore the base and hear firsthand accounts from former staff members. The project is part of UKAHT's initiative to share the stories of Antarctic exploration through modern technology, making the continent's history more accessible to the public.
7. <https://store.steampowered.com/app/1193510/Antarctic_Heritage_Trust/> - The Antarctic Heritage Trust offers a free virtual reality experience on Steam, allowing users to step inside Sir Edmund Hillary's Antarctic hut. Developed in partnership with Staples VR, this immersive experience provides a guided tour through the hut, showcasing artifacts and the daily life of Hillary's 23-man team during their mission to further science and exploration in Antarctica. The VR experience is available for free on the Steam platform, offering an accessible way to engage with Antarctic history.