



ANTARCTIC TOURISM BRIEFING

Overview

Antarctic tourism is...

Relatively young, and has been successful because of conscientious self-regulation by the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO), which is a reflection of respect for a very special part of the world.

Subject to formal regulations enacted by Antarctic Treaty signatories, including the recent Environmental Protocol, which provides measures to protect fauna and flora, and the marine environment.

Compatible with scientific research, the primary focus for human presence in Antarctica.

A small but growing industry, experiencing a trend of increasing numbers of visitors annually exhibiting, however, no evidence of more than minor or cumulative impacts throughout its existence of some 35 years.

Managed by IAATO, founded in 1991 to advocate, promote and practice safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic.

The opportunity for people from all over the world to see and experience Antarctica in an environmentally responsible way, improving the chance it will be well managed for future generations. IAATO's contribution to Antarctic Tourism provides a stunning example for the rest of the world of best practice self-regulation.



Human Activity and Private Sector Tourism in Antarctica

Human involvement in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean has evolved from the heroic era and exploitative sealing and whaling in the 19th and early 20th centuries to the precedence of science in the mid- to late twentieth century. Today we recognise the importance of this region to the health of the global environment and its intrinsic value as a huge wilderness area (larger than the size of the entire United States). Priority is given to understanding its ecosystems and to careful environmental stewardship. As awareness of the research and environmental values of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean has grown through the late twentieth and into the twenty-first century, an ecotourism industry has also developed.

The Tourism Industry and IAATO

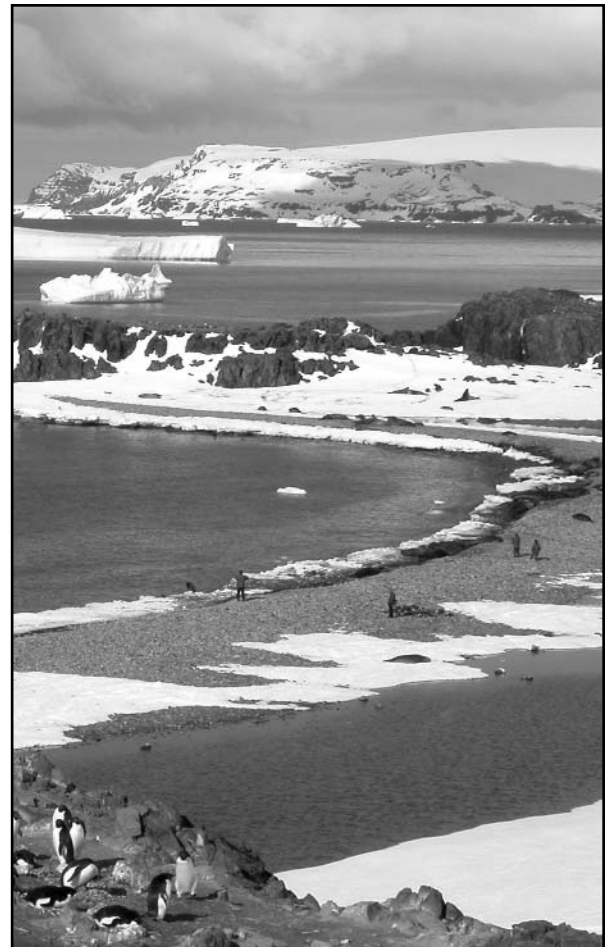
The modern Antarctic tourism industry was born with the launching of a specialist polar tourist ship, the *Lindblad Explorer*, by Lars Eric Lindblad of Sweden, in 1969. By 1991, the industry was well established, and with encouragement, in particular from the US Government (National Science Foundation), an association of international Antarctic tour operators was established to advocate, promote and practice safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic. Founded by seven private tour operators, the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) now has 69 members from Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, Italy Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, United Kingdom, United States and the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas). The IAATO objectives are listed in Appendix 1.

Tourism Activities in Antarctica

Visiting Antarctica and the Southern Ocean is an opportunity to experience and value a unique and wonderful environment.

Most tourism to the Antarctic is ship-based. Passengers are taken ashore using small inflatable boats for periods of one to three hours. Commercial sailing vessels and private yachts also visit Antarctica, and in recent years a small number of tourists have been flown to Antarctica and are involved in land-based expeditions. Tourist activities include small boat or Zodiac cruising, shore landings and, to a lesser extent, kayaking, mountain climbing, scuba diving, skiing, snowboarding, camping, marathon running, and helicopter operations. Large ships with passenger capacities over 1,000 visit the region for sightseeing, but do not offer landings. Over-flights from Australia and Chile offer “flight-seeing.”

In the 2003/04 Antarctic season (November 2003 to March 2004), 29 vessels chartered or owned by IAATO members visited the Antarctic. Close to 20,000 ship-based tourists were landed at Antarctic Peninsula sites and over 300 visited sites in other parts of Antarctica, mainly in the Ross Sea area. Three hundred and eight people participated in air-supported, land-based expeditions. There is one dedicated land-based tourist facility – a tent-based summer camp at Patriot Hills in the interior (Ellsworth Mountains), which is dismantled at the end of each summer season.





Tourism and Governmental Activities

Private sector tourist activities still account for a relatively small part of all human activity in Antarctica. There are 83 Government stations with some sort of permanent structures, operated by 25 countries. Infrastructure associated with this full-time presence includes buildings, fuel storage facilities, roads, research drilling rigs, Sno-cats and other vehicles, aircraft landing facilities and field camps. In 2002/03, there were 49 Government vessels operating around Antarctica.

There are now more people visiting Antarctica as tourists than with Government supported research programs. However, tourist days on land in Antarctica are estimated to be less than five percent of the people-days associated with national program activities. Tourist programs do not have permanent infrastructures. Human impact from tourists is minimal in comparison.

Tourism Impacts

Ship-based tourism in Antarctica is focused on the Antarctic Peninsula and, in particular, on a number of sites with wildlife, historical and scenic values. There is potential for frequent visits to these sites to create a cumulative impact on the environment. However, after 35 years there are very few discernible and significant environmental impacts from tourist activities. This can be attributed to a large extent to the policies and procedures established by IAATO to minimize and mitigate environmental impacts.

The Antarctic Treaty System and Tourism

Human activity in Antarctica is managed under the umbrella of the Antarctic Treaty System. This is a unique and remarkably successful international agreement dating from 1959, which designates Antarctica as a “natural reserve dedicated to peace and science.” From its birth in the cold war environment of the 1950s and during a period of tensions over territorial claims in Antarctica, the Antarctic Treaty has resulted in unprecedented international co-operation. For those of us who are involved in Antarctic tourism, it seems a model that, if applied to other aspects of human international interaction, would result in a much less dysfunctional human world. The Antarctic Treaty works through a combination of internationally agreed recommendations and guidelines, and national legislation.

The Environmental Protocol to the Antarctic Treaty requires environmental impact assessment and environmental monitoring of all human activities, including both private sector and government operations. All IAATO members provide environmental impact assessments to their government authorities. The Protocol, however, does not provide an easy mechanism for the management of cumulative impacts of all human activities (science and tourism) across a number of countries and/or operators.





Visitor Guidelines

Recognising the potential cumulative environmental impacts of tourism, the Antarctic tourist companies, through IAATO, have established a range of common procedures and guidelines.

Visitor Guidelines developed originally by tour operators in the 1980s, were later modified and strengthened by IAATO, which then provided the basis for a comprehensive Treaty Recommendation (XVIII-1) on tourism and visitor activities adopted by the Antarctic Treaty countries in 1994. IAATO, in conjunction with the United States National Science Foundation, maintains records of all IAATO member activities, and reports annually to the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings.

Other IAATO Guidelines and Procedures

IAATO has developed a number of other guidelines and procedures to assist its members in self-regulation. These include guidelines on numbers of people ashore; wildlife watching; Zodiac and helicopter operations; activity reporting; passenger, crew and staff briefings; contingency and emergency medical evacuation plans; and communication procedures to co-ordinate site visits. IAATO provides guidance for its members in environmental impact assessment and supports a site inventory program to monitor impacts at commonly visited sites. Site-specific guidelines are under development. IAATO regulations, guidelines and procedures are listed in Appendix 2.



Other National and International Regulations

In addition to the Antarctic Treaty System and IAATO guidelines and procedures, tour operators' activities are regulated by international air and maritime regulations. In particular, SOLAS (the International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea) and MARPOL (the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution by Ships), associated with Port State inspections, impose stringent safety and environmental requirements. Insurance needs also encourage high standards. In addition, tour operators must comply with appropriate national legislation, along with the legislation implementing the Antarctic Treaty.

Key IAATO Issues

Key issues that IAATO considers need to be addressed by the Antarctic Treaty Parties are:

- Recognition and support by Treaty Parties of the significance and success of a unified organization (IAATO) to coordinate and manage tourism activity in Antarctica. The alternative (no comparable management body) would be unacceptable and unworkable for protection of the Antarctic environment.
- Non-compliance by non-IAATO members – e.g. environmental impact assessment and reporting through their governmental agencies, and IAATO guidelines and ship scheduling.
- Ships with more than 500 passengers landing tourists in Antarctica.
- Formalised support for IAATO-formulated guidelines and procedures by the Antarctic Treaty Parties – e.g. incorporation of appropriate IAATO guidelines into Treaty Recommendations to strengthen their application.
- Support for cumulative impact monitoring programs – covering both tourist and governmental activities.

- Completion of a workable polar shipping code by the Treaty parties.
- Development of mechanisms to ensure safety and insurance issues are applied to extreme adventure tourism.
- Lack of consistent reporting by non-IAATO members and government programs on tourist activities in Antarctica.

The Future

Concerns have been expressed about the potential for further growth in Antarctic tourism resulting in unacceptable environmental impacts. Not all tourists will land, and it is usual for actual numbers to be lower than initial estimates. However, there is still a likelihood of a significant increase over the 2002/03 number of 13,263. The initial challenge of increased numbers is in the logistics of visit management. Operational procedures are critical for managing the increase in numbers. Monitoring of key sites is critical to assess any impacts of increased visitation. Large ship and sailing vessel-based tourism is likely to continue to grow. Governments need to make operators from their countries aware of the requirements of the Antarctic Treaty and encourage them to join IAATO.

IAATO considers that ship-based tourism will continue to be the major form of visitation to Antarctica. While air-supported, land-based tourism can be expected to increase, expense, logistics and weather variability will always be a barrier. Any significant new land-based development should require a comprehensive environmental evaluation for consideration by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting. This will enable extensive opportunity for review before any infrastructure is established.

Conclusion

To date, private sector Antarctic tourism has developed as a remarkably low impact and co-operative model. Thousands of people have been able to experience and appreciate the Antarctic wilderness, with much less environmental impact than in any other part of the globe. Antarctica belongs to the people of the world. The more people can see and experience it in an environmentally responsible way, the better chance it will be well managed for future generations.

A pristine environment is critical to the future of the Antarctic tourism industry. IAATO is committed to continuing its work, in association with the Antarctic Treaty governments, to ensure that future generations have the opportunity to experience an Antarctic environment that is not impaired by our current and future human activities in the region.

[November 2004]

Appendixes:

1. IAATO objectives
2. Regulations, guidelines and procedures relating to Antarctic tourism

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Appendix 1

IAATO Objectives

To represent Antarctic tour operators and others organizing and conducting travel to the Antarctic to the Antarctic Treaty Parties, the international conservation community and the public at large.

To advocate, promote and practice safe and environmentally responsible travel to the Antarctic.

To circulate, promote and follow the Guidance for Visitors to the Antarctic and Guidance for Those Organizing and Conducting Tourism and Non-governmental Activities in the Antarctic, as adopted by the Antarctic Treaty System (Recommendation XVIII-1).

To operate within the parameters of the Antarctic Treaty System, including the Antarctic Treaty and the Protocol on the Environment and Annexes, along with MARPOL, SOLAS and similar international and national laws and agreements.

To foster continued cooperation among its members and to monitor IAATO programs, including the pattern and frequency of visits to specific sites within the Antarctic. And to coordinate itineraries so that no more than 100 people are ashore at any one time in any one place.

To provide a forum for the international, private-sector travel industry to share expertise and opinions and to uphold the highest standards among members.

To enhance public awareness and concern for the conservation of the Antarctic environment and its associated ecosystems and to better inform the media, governments and environmental organizations about private-sector travel to these regions.

To create a corps of ambassadors for the continued protection of Antarctica by offering the opportunity to experience the continent first hand.

To support science in Antarctica through cooperation with national Antarctic programs, including logistical support and research.

To foster cooperation between private-sector travel and the international scientific community in the Antarctic.



To ensure that the best qualified staff and field personnel are employed by IAATO members through continued training and education. And to encourage and develop international acceptance of evaluation, certification and accreditation programs for Antarctic personnel.

Appendix 2

Regulations, Guidelines and Procedures Relating to Antarctic Tourism

Numerous legal mechanisms exist to address activities of all human presence in Antarctica, enacted either by the Antarctic Treaty of 1959, by mainly marine legislation that applies to virtually all ships at sea, or by the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (1991). The Protocol, in particular, folded many of the earlier regulations into its Articles and Annexes, thus strengthening the mechanisms now applicable to everyone who visits Antarctica, whether in the science community, support for science, or tourism. IAATO has adopted these regulatory mechanisms as they materialized, and in some cases, practised them before respective Treaty regulations came into force. For example, tour operators and their passengers practised a 'Code of Environmental Conduct' prior to the existence of IAATO in 1991, a 'Code' that is now in force as Recommendation XVIII-1 (1994) (see below).

All tourists on IAATO-member expeditions, whether a citizen of a Treaty signatory of the Protocol or not, are obligated to observe requirements of their country of citizenship by virtue of national legislation enacted as a result of ratification of the Protocol; or subject to requirements of the country in which the tour operator is based.

Marine Regulations, Station Visit Guidelines and those initiated by IAATO as operative documents complete the list.

1. Antarctic Treaties, Laws and Regulations, Resolutions etc.

- Antarctic Treaty of 1959
- Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals (CCAS 1972)
- Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR 1980)
- Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (1991)
 - Annex I-Environmental Impact Assessment
 - Annex II-Conservation of Antarctic Fauna and Flora
 - Annex III-Waste Disposal and Waste Management
 - Annex IV-Prevention of Marine Pollution
 - Annex V-Area Protection and Management
- Recommendation XVIII-1:
 - Guidance for Visitors to the Antarctic (including all available languages)
 - Guidance for Those Organising and Conducting Tourism and Non-Governmental Activities in the Antarctic
- Resolution 5 (1995) Antarctic Treaty Inspection Checklist for Tourist Ships
- As agreed at ATCM XXVII (2004)
 - Resolution 2 (2004) Guidelines for the Operation of Aircraft Near Concentrations of Birds in the Antarctic
 - Resolution 3 (2004) Tourism and Non Governmental Activities: Enhanced Cooperation Amongst Parties
 - Resolution 4 (2004) and Measure 4 Guidelines on Contingency Planning, Insurance and other Matters for Tourist and Other Non-Governmental Activities in the the Antarctic Treaty Area
 - Decision 4 (2004) Guidelines for Ships Operating in Arctic and Antarctic Ice-Covered Waters

2. Air Regulations

- *Convention on International Civil Aviation* (Chicago Convention), 1944, came into force 1947, and subsequent Annexes and Protocols

- Annex 16 (Environmental Protection) to the *Convention on International Civil Aviation*. Volume I, Aircraft Noise; Volume II, Aircraft Engine Emissions
- Resolution A33-7: *Consolidated statement of continuing ICAO policies and practices related to environmental protection* – Adopted October 2001. The statement is revised every three years by ICAO Council’s Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection (CAEP)
- The *Chicago Convention* is the international agreement that regulates civil aviation. It is regularly and frequently improved by the adoption of Annexes, Protocols and additional Conventions. In this way ICAO operates in a similar manner to the IMO; the CAEP is a direct equivalent to MEPC

3. Marine Regulations

- SOLAS, International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 and its Protocol of 1988
- ISM Code (International Management Code for the Safe Operation of Ships)
- IACS (International Association of Class Societies)
- International Convention on Loadlines, 1966 (LoadLines 66)
- Protocol of 1988 relating to the International Convention on Load Lines, 1966 IL PROT 88
- STCW-95 International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978, as amended in 1995 (STCW Convention)
- Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972 (COLREG 72)
- International Convention on Tonnage Measurements of Ships, 1969 (Tonnage 69)
- Arctic Shipping Pollution Prevention Regime (ASPPR) Certificate
- U.K.: Sailing vessels operating from a commercial basis are part of the Small Boat Registry and are subject to the control of Marine Coastguard Agency (MCA)
- Marine pollution is regulated by the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution of Ships, adopted by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in 1973. The convention was subsequently modified by a Protocol passed in 1978 and is known as MARPOL 73/78. IMO’s Marine Environmental Protection Committee (MEPC) regularly reviews the provisions of the convention
- Resolution MEPC.42(30) (entered into force 1992): Designation of the Antarctic area as a “Special Area” under Annex I (Regulations for the Prevention of Pollution by Oil) and Annex V (Regulations for the Prevention of Pollution by Garbage)
- Resolution MEPC.57(33) (entered into force 1994): Designation of the Antarctic area as a “Special Area” under Annex II (Regulations for the Prevention of Pollution by Noxious Liquid Substances)

4. IAATO Guidelines And Operating Procedures

- IAATO Bylaws
- Zodiac Guidelines for Passengers and Staff
- IAATO Marine Wildlife Watching Guidelines
- IAATO Slide Show/Guidelines and Briefing Presentation
- IAATO Expedition Leader and Ship Officers Seasonal Instructions
- IAATO Pre-Season Checklist
- IAATO Vessel Call Data
- IAATO Ship Schedules
- IAATO Expedition Leader Schedules
- IAATO Emergency Medical Evaluation Response Plan (EMER)
- Special Activity Guidelines: Helicopter, Scuba, Camping, Mountaineering, Kayaking, Remotely Operated Vehicle
- Expedition Leader and Staff Resource Notebook

5. Station Visit Guidelines

- Palmer and McMurdo Station Guidelines and Station Visits
- Procedures for Tourist or Non-Governmental Expeditions Requesting a Visit to a British Antarctic Survey Research Station
- South Pole Operating Procedure for visits to Amundsen–Scott Station

