



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ANTARCTICA TOUR OPERATORS

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A member organization founded in 1991 to advocate, promote and practice safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic

NEWS RELEASE

Antarctic Tourism Figures Released as IAATO's 25th Anniversary Meeting Begins

EMBARGOED UNTIL 3 May 2016, 0800 EST.

Newport, Rhode Island, USA: The International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) today announced its tourism figures for the 2015-2016 Antarctic season on the first day of its 25th Anniversary Meeting in its home town of Newport, Rhode Island, USA.

The total numbers of visitors travelling to Antarctica, with IAATO members, was 38,478, an increase of 4.6% compared to the previous season. Overall, levels of visitation have been increasing steadily since 2011-2012 in line with global trends. Estimates released for next season, 2016-2017, indicate that growth will continue with 43,885 visitors expected, still less than the peak of 46,265 during the 2007-2008 austral summer.

Visiting the coastal regions of Antarctica is the most popular form of tourism with only 1.1% of visitors travelling inland to the Antarctic interior in 2015-2016, comparable with previous years. Most (98.9%) seaborne passengers travelled to the Antarctic Peninsula with 21.3% of these on 'cruise only' vessels that do not make landings. The remainder visited the Peninsula on vessels carrying fewer than 500 passengers, which make landings. Of these visitors, 72.5% sailed and 6% flew from South America. In the case of the latter, known as air/cruise tourism, passengers land on the Peninsula and immediately board a ship. This sector showed the most growth compared to the previous season, increasing by 37.5%. Overall, seaborne tourism with landings grew by 10.5% since the 2014-2015 season, a trend that is expected to continue next year.

American and Australian visitors remained the most numerous, accounting for 35.5% and 11% of the total number respectively, similar to last year. China moved up to third place, accounting for 10.6% of the total, increasing by 25.7% since the previous season. British (8.4%), German (7.4%) and Canadian (4.8%) visitors were the next most abundant nationalities in Antarctica in 2015-2016.



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Tourism growth management is a topic for discussion at IAATO's annual meeting in Newport, which in 2016 celebrates 25 years of promoting the practice of safe and environmentally responsible private sector travel to the Antarctic.

Dr. Kim Crosbie, IAATO Executive Director says, "2016 is a special year for IAATO. The last 25 years have shown that with careful management it is possible for visitors to experience Antarctica without having an adverse impact on the environment. However, the appetite to visit Antarctica is clearly still strong so IAATO must build on the foundations laid down in the past to meet future challenges and opportunities in order to support the long-term conservation of Antarctica."

ENDS

Issued by the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators.

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Notes for Editors:

- Images are available.
- IAATO's 25th Anniversary meeting runs from 2 – 5 May 2016. It is not open to the public or press, but enquiries are welcome.
- Following the meeting, on 6 May 2015, there will be a half-day facilitated workshop on South Georgia visitor management with the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.
- The vast majority of tourism voyages operate in the Antarctic Peninsula region during the five-month austral summer season (from November to March), departing from Ushuaia or, to a lesser extent, from other ports north of the Antarctic Treaty Area.
- Air-land tourism includes those IAATO member operators who provide flights to the Antarctic interior for deep field excursions or trips to Emperor penguin colonies.
- The air/cruise tourism category describes travel programs with at least one flight in or out of King George Island, combined with a Peninsula cruise.



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- IAATO requires its members to abide by the Antarctic Treaty System. Therefore, tour operators refrain from making any landings in Antarctica from vessels carrying more than 500 passengers. They must also coordinate with each other so that not more than one vessel is at a landing site at any one time.

Table I. Passenger numbers for 2015-16, and estimates for 2016-2017, as of April 26, 2016, subject to change. See also www.iaato.org/tourism-statistics.

	2016-2017 <i>Estimate</i>	2015-2016 Season	2014-2015 Season	2013-2014 Season	2012-2013 Season	2011-2012 Season
Seaborne tourism with landings	31,493	27,607	25,341	25,526	23,305	20,271
Seaborne tourism, no landings	8680	8109	9459	9670	9070	4872
Air & cruise combination, with landings	3154	2,353	1471	1848	1587	860
Air & land tourism, Antarctic interior	558	409	431	361	354	516
Over-flights, no landings	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	43,885	38,478	36,702	37,405	34,316	26,519

Table II. Percentage of Known Passenger Nationalities for the 2015-2016 season

Nationality	Percentage (%) of Total
United States	35.5
Australia	11.0
China	10.6
United Kingdom	8.4
Germany	7.4
Canada	4.8
France	3.0
Switzerland	2.9
Japan	1.9
Other	14.5



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About IAATO

IAATO is a member organization founded in 1991 to advocate and promote the practice of safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic. IAATO currently has 120 members. IAATO Members work together to develop, adopt and implement operational standards that mitigate potential environmental impacts. Numerous guidelines have been adopted over the last 25 years that have proven to be successful methods in avoiding such impacts. These include but are not limited to: site specific guidelines, site selection criteria, passenger to staff ratios, limiting numbers of passengers ashore, boot washing guidelines and the prevention of the transmission of alien organisms, wilderness etiquette, garbage policy, ship scheduling and vessel communication procedures, emergency medical evacuation procedures, emergency contingency plans, reporting procedures, marine wildlife watching guidelines, station visitation policies and more.