

# Thinking of flying a drone in Antarctica?

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## Read this before travelling....

IAATO is cautioning all potential travellers to Antarctica, who are hoping to fly a drone, or Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), to check with their travel agent or tour operator before packing their device. IAATO Members have agreed that, for the 2015-16 season, they will not allow the recreational use of UAVs in the unique, and often wildlife rich, coastal areas of Antarctica. Recognizing the value of UAVs for research and certain commercial uses, such as documentary filmmaking, the intent is to ensure that their use is contained and carefully controlled. The ban will be reviewed next year to allow for potential technological advances and further developments within the regulatory community.

IAATO members have approved the use of authorized UAVs in the interior of Antarctica under strict and carefully controlled conditions.

Non-IAATO members and private expeditions should contact their relevant Competent Authority or government agency (that authorize activities in Antarctica) if they intend to operate a UAV anywhere in or around the continent.

Through the unique global partnership that is the Antarctic Treaty system, the entire continent is formally designated as a 'natural reserve, devoted to peace and science'. Antarctica is regarded as the last great wilderness on our planet, still pristine with wildlife and landscapes that show little evidence of direct human activity. To visit, and operate in, an environment like this comes with a responsibility to do so carefully and with minimal impact.

Ultimately, this means that **all** human activities, whether for science or tourism, have to go through an Environmental Impact Assessment by a relevant Competent Authority/government agency. Critically, IAATO Member operators have agreed that their activities must have less than a minor or transitory impact on the environment. They submit permit applications annually and, if their planned activities meet all criteria, they are authorized and a permit granted.

IAATO member operators must include an application to fly UAVs within their overall permit application. The difficulty for prospective UAV pilots is that Treaty Parties, and IAATO members, are concerned about their use in Antarctica; flying drones is a relatively new activity and while there are situations when they may be useful (e.g. science, ice reconnaissance for vessel navigation, giving visitors a unique perspective of historic sites), there are many questions still to be answered in terms of their potential impact on the environment. The use of UAVs is therefore in a state of development and, until more information is available,

both the Competent Authorities and IAATO Member Operators are taking a precautionary approach when it comes to their operation. The intention is to devise a pragmatic policy framework that will allow safe and environmentally responsible use under controlled circumstances.

If you are thinking of taking a UAV with you to Antarctica, please discuss this with the operator you intend to travel with **before departure**.