



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

IAATO 24th Annual Meeting concludes in Punta Arenas, Chile; Antarctic Tourism Statistics for 2012-13 Season Released

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE...

*May 8, 2013, Providence, Rhode Island, USA...*A new five-year Strategic Plan, an expanded Membership and committee structure, and a new yacht dockside observer program were among the items adopted at the 24th Annual Meeting of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO), held April 22-24 in Punta Arenas, Chile.

IAATO also released its final tourism statistics for the 2012-13 season, which concluded in early April. The total number of tourists traveling with IAATO operators to Antarctica was 34,316, an increase from the previous season but not significantly different than 2009-10 and 2010-11 when totals were 36,881 and 33,824 respectively. Tourism continued well below the pace set during the 2007-08 season, when IAATO operators transported 45,213 visitors to the continent.

Tourism estimates for next season, 2013-14, as provided by IAATO operators, were also released in Punta Arenas. Overall, tourism is expected to grow 3%, from 34,316 this past season to 35,354 across the various categories.

More than 130 members, invited guests and IAATO staff from 20 different countries participated in the Punta Arenas meeting. Members had selected the southern Chile town as the site for IAATO 24 following an invitation last year from Camilo Sanhueza, Director of the Antarctic Division of the Chilean Foreign Ministry and SERNATUR, the Chilean National Tourism Service to consider the Magallanes Region for its next conference. Counselor Sanhueza welcomed the meeting to Punta Arenas, noting the importance that both the Chilean government and IAATO place on environmental stewardship and well-managed tourism in the Antarctic region.

The three-day agenda included approval by Members of many measures relevant to IAATO's mission to advocate and practice safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic. Among the initiatives and decisions agreed or introduced at the meeting:

- *New Executive Committee.* Members voted to approve Marlynda Elstgeest of Waterproof Expeditions as the new Chair of the Executive Committee, and re-appointed Rich Pruitt

of Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd.; Capt. Leif Skog of Lindblad Expeditions; and Skip Novak of Pelagic Expeditions. Joining the committee for the first time is Isabelle Vareille of Compagnie du Ponant. The meeting also thanked two committee members stepping down after five years of service: Ted Cheeseman, who served as Chair this past year, and Ute Hohn-Bowen, with two previous years as Chair.

- *Executive Director-Elect, and new Administrative Officer.* Dr. Kim Crosbie, who has been part of the Secretariat staff since 2005 and is currently Operations Director, addressed members as the new Executive Director-Elect. She was appointed to her new position by the Executive Committee in February, and will start in her official capacity July 1. Members were also introduced to Janeen Haase, who started as IAATO Administrative Officer April 15 just prior to the start of the meeting. She will assume many of the duties of the outgoing Administrative Director Steve Wellmeier, who will be leaving IAATO the end of June. Claudia Holgate was also promoted from Environmental Operations Assistant to Environmental Manager for the association.
- *New Strategic Plan.* Members approved a new five-year Strategic Plan, which outlines a vision for the association: "Through self-regulation, Antarctic tourism is a sustainable, safe activity that causes no more than a minor or transitory impact on the environment and creates a corps of ambassadors for the continued protection of Antarctica."
- *Growing Membership.* Membership in IAATO grew during the previous year from 111 to 116 members, with several new Antarctic tour operators joining the ranks of the organization: Seabourn Cruise Line Ltd., Henry Cookson Adventures and Selma Expeditions. Three associate members were also voted in as full Members of IAATO: Passat Kreuzfahrten, Polar Latitudes and Voile Australe.
- *Dockside Observer Program; new Yacht Committee.* As another building block in the creation of a robust association-wide accreditation scheme, Members agreed to the implementation of a dockside observer program and checklist for use with IAATO yachts. The program, which trials during the 2013-14 season, parallels an existing observer scheme that IAATO has had in place for many years for larger vessels operated by Members. The meeting also approved the creation of a new IAATO Yacht Committee to deal with the issues related to smaller boats – with 12 or fewer passengers – operating commercially to Antarctica.

In releasing the IAATO Antarctic tourism statistics, the organization noted that the increase in the overall season tally for the 2012-13 season of 34,316 visitors – up from 26,519 the previous year – was due to several factors. These included a mild resurgence of voyages by cruise-only operators – where no landings ashore are offered – from five to seven, accounting for 9,070 passengers and approximately 5,000 more than the previous year.

Growth was also seen in tourism segment that includes traditional small and medium-size expedition ships and yachts – all carrying 500 or fewer passengers and conducting landings – from 20,271 to 23,305 passengers. Numbers increased in the air-cruise category, up from 860 during 2011-12 to 1,587 for the season just ended. Air-land tourism declined more than 30% from 516 to 354 visitors during the 2012-13 season.

Administrative Director Steve Wellmeier said that the increases during the 2012-13 season were not surprising to the Membership, as the numbers were accurately estimated and

reported to the public a year ago and reflected continued interest in visiting Antarctica by the public.

For next season, those tourism categories where passengers go ashore – traditional small and medium-size expedition ships and yachts, all carrying 500 or fewer passengers – is expected to remain flat, growing slightly from 23,305 to 23,348 visitors. Numbers also will remain virtually unchanged in the air-cruise category: 1,587 for the season just ended compared to the 1,588 estimated for 2013-14.

Cruise-only tourism, aboard 500-plus passenger vessels with no passengers going ashore, is expected to increase around 9%, from 9,070 to 9,920, although the number of voyages remains the same: seven. Air-land tourism by the three IAATO Members that provide deep-field excursions and expeditions is also projected to increase from the 354 visitors transported inland this past season to 498 for the 2013-14 austral summer.

Members also learned at the meeting that they and their passengers together contributed more than US\$200,000 during the 2012-13 season in cash donations to Antarctic-related charitable causes, conservation and preservation organizations, adding to the total of more than US\$2.7 million over the past nine years. These organizations include Save the Albatross, World Wildlife Fund, Oceanites, Antarctic Heritage Trust and others. In addition, IAATO operators transported nearly 100 scientists, station and national program personnel gratis or at minimal expense to/from Antarctica during the season.

IAATO Antarctic tourism segment	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14 estimate
Seaborne traditional – with landings	20,271	23,305	23,348
Seaborne cruise-only – no landings	4,872	9,070	9,920
Air / cruise	860	1,587	1,588
Air / land (deep field)	516	354	498
Total	26,519	34,316	35,354

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ABOUT IAATO

IAATO is a member organization founded in 1991 to advocate, promote and practice safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic. IAATO currently has 116 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 22 years that have proven to be successful in avoiding such impacts. These include but are not limited to: site specific guidelines, site selection criteria, passenger-to-staff ratios, limiting the number 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.