



Blog | Antarctica's Supporting Role in Endeavour for Gender Equality

For us, International Women's Day is about honoring female Antarctic ambassadors within our organization who are creating a legacy for the polar women of tomorrow, says IAATO's Janeen Haase

In 1911, British explorer Robert Falcon Scott and Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen went head-to-head in the globally renowned race to reach the South Pole.

It was a seminal moment in world history; two courageous people battling to break boundaries and achieve a feat thought impossible. The dramatic journey would conclude with victory for Amundsen and in tragedy for Scott.



That same year, as the two giants of polar exploration readied themselves for their respective expeditions, another unimaginable feat was taking place; one which would break through socio-political boundaries and prove the impossible, possible – the battle for women's equality.

A year after Scott's ship, Terra Nova, sailed from Cardiff, and on the eve of King George V's coronation, 40,000 women from 28 suffrage societies marched for female enfranchisement. It was in this year also, that the first International Women's Day was held.

The continued struggle for women's equality would eventually bring female explorers to the white desert, with the most celebrated Antarctic first for women in February 1935 when Danish-Norwegian explorer Caroline Mikkelsen became the first woman to set foot on land there.

Today, we celebrate the 108th International Women's Day, and along with it the hundreds of women who, since that first step to recognizing equality between the genders, have joined and led their own Antarctic expeditions; many of whom we are proud to have within the



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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.

ranks – and at the forefront – of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO).

While little has changed across the Antarctic landscape since the days of Amundsen and Scott, thanks in no small part to the incredible work of the unique global partnership that is the Antarctic Treaty System, and the ‘take only memories, leave only footprints’ policy of IAATO, women have now travelled there since the 1700s, landed there since the 1930s, worked there since the 1950s and overwintered there as part of research teams since the 60s.

No one government, NGO, charity, institution, women's network or corporation is singularly responsible for International Women's Day, but individual organizations may declare an annual theme for the event that chimes with their specific agenda, ethos or cause. For us, International Women's Day is about honoring the female Antarctic ambassadors within IAATO who are creating a legacy for the polar women of tomorrow; whether that's Robyn Woodhead who earned a world record traversing the Antarctic, is at the helm of one of IAATO's deep-field operators and a formidable and forward-thinking voice on IAATO's executive committee, or Dr Justine Shaw and Dr Mary-Anne Lea, co-founders of the Women in Polar Science Network.

Today IAATO Secretariat is comprised mostly of women, there are more female voices across its membership, and the organization's operations function is led by a female dynamic duo.

I hope 2020 sees more inspiring women among the ranks of responsible tourism leaders, and more girls aspiring to one day join them.

Janeen Haase

Director of Governance & Administration
International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators

About the author

Janeen joined IAATO in 2013 and is responsible for IAATO's corporate governance and administration, which includes ensuring the association is proactive against and protected from any potential anti-trust violations and liability issues, as well as ensuring human resources and benefits compliance. In addition, she manages the association's finances and budgets and the membership application process.



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Prior to joining IAATO, Janeen worked as a senior program manager in International Development for Global Health and Global Literacy NGOs and trade associations in Washington, DC for 10 years. In this capacity, she managed high-level projects for international donors some of which include: The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), The Hewlett Foundation, The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), ChildFund, and several Ministries of Education. She was fortunate to travel extensively in her work, including many countries in the developing world.

Janeen has lived and worked overseas in Germany and France and speaks both languages. She grew up in Rhode Island on the water with a father who was an old salty sailor and had a choice; love to sail or stay home. She chose to love sailing!

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 Members work together to develop, adopt and implement operational standards that mitigate potential environmental impacts. These standards have proved to be successful including but are not limited to: Antarctic 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, ship scheduling and vessel communication procedures, emergency medical evacuation procedures, emergency contingency plans, reporting procedures, marine wildlife watching guidelines, station visitation policies and much more. IAATO has a global network of over 100 members.