



IAATO Welcomes New Members into Responsible Antarctic Tourism Fold

Albatross Expeditions is granted Operator status, Cookson Adventures and Princess Cruises Become Provisional Operators, and eight gain Associate Member status, bringing membership to 116

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Kingstown, Rhode Island, USA: The International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) has welcomed ten new members into the responsible tourism fold.

Members welcomed Provisional Operators Cookson Adventures and Princess Cruises into the Association, while granting provisional operator Albatros Expeditions full Operator status and welcoming Across Latin America – China, Caissa Tourism Group – China, Damen Shipyards, Lamei Tours China, Mystic Cruises, Pelorus and Pro Fuels as Associate Members, at its annual meeting, held on May 3 in Cape Town, South Africa.

Every year, IAATO members set aside competitive interests to have open and candid discussions on safety, environmental protection and self-regulation. Decision-making is supported by recommendations developed by IAATO's many dedicated committees and working groups throughout the year. The meetings conclude annually with the voting in of new policies on best practice which support our mission of promoting and advocating safe and environmentally responsible travel to Antarctica and welcoming applicants who demonstrate IAATO's ethos.

The newest affiliates bring IAATO's membership to 116; comprising 48 operators, five provisional operators, and 63 associate members.

Mark van der Hulst, IAATO Executive Committee Chair, said: "IAATO is a trusted and valued Antarctic stakeholder thanks to its demonstrated commitment to safe, environmentally responsible travel. Joining our unique organization exhibits a company's shared desire to safeguard Antarctica and learn from the pooled wisdom of the IAATO family, which comes from the hundreds of years of experience we have between us.

"As a self-regulating body we have stringent criteria for joining in order to ensure that every new member shares our mission and vision, so gaining membership reflects a great deal of hard work.



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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.

“We’re delighted to welcome ten new members into the organization and grant Albatros Expeditions full operator status.”

All new provisional operators are required to carry an IAATO observer during their first season of operations in the Antarctic to witness their operations in practice and offer feedback to ensure they meet IAATO’s robust operational guidelines. At this year’s annual meeting, members also approved a mandatory observation scheme for all IAATO operators.

IAATO has long taken a proactive role in managing pressure on the Antarctic environment so that visitors have no more than a minor or transitory impact. Part of this work involves the annual launch of the IAATO Ship Scheduler, a database which has used IAATO and Antarctic Treaty System requirements to set limits on time, number of passengers allowed, and number of daily visits to visitor sites around the Antarctic coast for almost two decades.

The redevelopment of the scheduler, will meet increasing vessel and management needs and offer a solution for streamlining vessel to vessel communications, joins a host of responsible tourism measures introduced by IAATO during its three-and-a-half day annual meeting, including a unanimous vote to impose mandatory measures to prevent whale strikes in cetacean-rich Antarctic waters, more stringent restrictions on the commercial use of remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS), robust adjustments to visitor guidelines for activities on the Antarctic peninsula; a new code of conduct for vessel operators; implementing a mandatory observer scheme; support for the development of Marine Protected Areas; and approval to expand research into the health of penguin populations at visitor sites. IAATO and its counterpart in the northern hemisphere, the Association for Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators, introduced guidelines that will arm visitors to the polar regions with responsible solutions for reducing their waste and plastic footprint.

Janeen Haase, IAATO Interim Co-Executive Director - Governance & Membership, said: “IAATO’s proactive management strategies can act as a role model for safe, environmentally responsible travel, so we are always delighted to receive applications from new members who recognize that and want to come into the fold.

“Being an IAATO member shows the world you have a real passion for Antarctica, you recognize that visiting the continent is a privilege that comes with a responsibility to leave it pristine and that you have an ardent desire to preserve its incredible landscape and wildlife for future generations.”

ENDS -

Issued by the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators.

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Notes for Editors:

- In addition to its own bylaws and requirements for membership, IAATO requires its members to abide by the Antarctic Treaty System and other international regulations.

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.

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