



Annual Meeting of Antarctic Tour Operators Opens with Tributes to Lost Colleagues

Arnaud Dhallenne, Sophie Labruhe Marconnet and Sarah Auffret were killed in tragic accidents in March this year

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 30, 2019

Cape Town, South Africa:

The annual meeting of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) opened today with tributes to three colleagues who were lost in two tragic accidents in March this year.

Experienced skipper Arnaud Dhallenne and yachtswoman Sophie Labruhe Marconnet were lost at sea on March 5, swept off the yacht Paradise when it was knocked down by a rogue wave as they were sailing from South Georgia to Uruguay.

Sarah Auffret, Environmental Agent for IAATO's northern counterpart Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO), lost her life on the Ethiopian Airlines flight ET0302 that crashed soon after take-off from Addis Ababa, on March 10. She was on her way to the UN Environment Assembly in Nairobi to present IAATO and AECO's joint work on the Clean Seas initiative.

Every year, IAATO members set aside competitive interests to have open and candid discussions about visitor management in Antarctica, driven by the organization's commitment to safety and environmental protection. Decision-making is supported by recommendations developed by IAATO's many dedicated committees and working groups throughout the year, based on data collection, monitoring and consultation with stakeholders. The meetings conclude annually with the voting in of new policies on best practice which support IAATO's mission of promoting and advocating safe and environmentally responsible travel to Antarctica.

Opening the meeting, in Cape Town, South Africa, IAATO Executive Committee Chairman Terry Shaller, said: "The loss of Arnaud, Sophie and Sarah has been a terrible blow to the IAATO family, an incredibly tight-knit community. They were all exceptional ambassadors for Antarctica and embodied everything IAATO stands for. We do and will continue to feel their absence acutely."



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ANTARCTICA TOUR OPERATORS

50 South County Commons Way, Unit E-5B
South Kingstown, RI 02879 USA

+ 1 401 841 9700 OFFICE
+ 1 401 841 9704 FAX

iaato@iaato.org
www.iaato.org

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.

A memorial room to the three was opened at the start of the conference, where friends and colleagues will be able take time to reflect and to write their tributes or share memories in three books of condolence which will then be passed to the families.

Arnaud was born in France in 1952 and sailed his whole life, starting a long and distinguished career on Eric Tabarly's Pen Duick VI during the first Whitbread Round the World Race in 1973.

In the early 1980s, he launched his own charter business offering trips around the world, first on his own boat, and then on legendary yachts such as Pen Duick III & Pen Duick VI amongst others. A keen racer, he continued competing throughout his career, finishing third in the Route du Rhum in 2006.

After acquiring Paradise in 2008, he started spending more and more time sailing in the Southern Ocean, offering charters to Antarctica.

Sophie was born in France in 1951. In 1977, she met Oleg Bely, joining him on a transatlantic crossing, having not sailed much before. From then on, she never stopped sailing, forgoing a home on land and instead raising their two children on the boat, sailing to Antarctica, South Georgia and around the world.



Arnaud Dhallenne



Sarah Auffret



Sophie Labruhe Marconnet

Sophie and Oleg were among the first to offer yacht charters to Antarctica, aboard Kotick and then Kotick 2 in the early 1980s, and although not members of IAATO, were treasured members of the yachting community.

Sarah was Anglo French, born and raised in Brittany although frequently visiting her mother's family in North Lincolnshire.

After moving to Tromsø, she worked as a guide before joining UK Antarctic Heritage Trust as an assistant at Port Lockroy Antarctic Base in 2013/14 returning as base leader in 2014/15.



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ANTARCTICA TOUR OPERATORS

50 South County Commons Way, Unit E-5B
South Kingstown, RI 02879 USA

+ 1 401 841 9700 OFFICE
+ 1 401 841 9704 FAX

iaato@iaato.org
www.iaato.org

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.

She then spent three years with Toronto-based IAATO-member operator G Adventures, working in the Arctic and Antarctic before returning to Tromsø to join AECO in 2018, leading industry efforts to cut back on the use of plastics.

Lisa Kelley, Head of Operations for IAATO, said: “Our season has ended with a terrible loss to our community; three people who have been taken from their families, friends and colleagues while doing the jobs they loved, and carried out with incredible skill, tenacity and spirit.

“These tragedies have shone a spotlight on the unique nature of what we do and how our jobs forge relationships more akin to family than those between colleagues. It is ultimately these bonds that help us through difficult times.

“I have no doubt that Arnaud, Sophie and Sarah will not only live on in our thoughts but in our deeds, and I think that’s the best tribute we could pay to them.”

ENDS -

Issued by the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators.

Contact : Hayley Court, Tel: +44 (0)7885542104; email: hcourt@iaato.org

Notes for Editors:

- Images are available.
- 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.



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ANTARCTICA TOUR OPERATORS

50 South County Commons Way, Unit E-5B
South Kingstown, RI 02879 USA

+ 1 401 841 9700 OFFICE
+ 1 401 841 9704 FAX

iaato@iaato.org
www.iaato.org

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.