Polar Expedition Leaders Gather for Responsible Tourism Conference

Responsible field leadership on the agenda at third joint conference of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators and Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators

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Kingstown, Rhode Island, USA: They may be literally poles apart, but more than 80 Antarctic and Arctic expedition guides will gather together later this month for a joint conference on responsible polar tourism.

The conference, held in Sturbridge, Massachusetts, US from September 22 to 25, is the third bi-annual joint conference of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) and the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO). This year’s theme focuses on responsible field leadership.

The two-and-a-half-day conference program gathers guides, expedition leaders and operations managers working for IAATO and AECO with the aim of sharing learning and knowledge to support the two associations’ joint mission of promoting safe and environmentally responsible travel to the polar regions.

The packed program will shape discussions on embodying both company and AECO and IAATO ethos while in the field and upholding the reputation of operators as responsible tourism providers. Delegates can expect industry updates, presentations on the UN Clean Seas initiative, Antarctic Ambassadorship and citizen science as well as a look at the tourist of tomorrow, with particular focus on guest expectations, cultural sensitivity and the role of marketing and communication.
“This is an important event in the IAATO and AECO calendar as it is for an opportunity to have a wealth of polar guiding knowledge and expertise in one room so that everyone can benefit from shared learning,” said Susan Adie, head of IAATO’s Field Operations Committee.

“Field staff discuss issues they face in the field, projects that can advance our shared mission of safe and environmentally responsible polar travel.

“It’s also obviously a chance to share best practice from past initiatives in previous Arctic and Antarctic seasons, from beach clean-ups in Svalbard to citizen science projects around the Antarctic Peninsula and sub-Antarctic islands, such as measuring krill aggregation or analyzing water samples from the southern ocean for signs of microplastic.”

Field staff development is a priority for the two polar travel associations responsible for the conference.

“Field staff are important decision-makers in our industry. Our goal is to educate and empower the guides and expedition leaders that are out the field every day to ensure that all activities are carried out in a considerate and responsible manner,” said Frigg Jørgensen, executive director for AECO.

IAATO and AECO are international member organizations dedicated to advocating and promoting safe, environmentally responsible and considerate private sector Antarctic and Arctic travel, respectively. IAATO and AECO members represent the majority of tourism operations in the Antarctic and Arctic.

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Notes to Editors

The biannual joint AECO/IAATO Polar Field Staff Conference is aimed at operation managers, expedition leaders and senior field staff, who are working for members of AECO and/or IAATO. This year’s theme is responsible field leadership. The two-and-a-half-day conference will take place at Publick House in Sturbridge, Massachusetts, from September 22 to 25.

For press enquiries, please call Amanda Lynnes, IAATO Head of Communications and Environment via alynnies@iaato.org or +44 7879777036 (Timezone GMT)

About the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (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.

Contact
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About the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO)
Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators is an international organization for expedition cruise operators and associates in the Arctic, dedicated to managing environmentally-friendly, safe and considerate cruise tourism. The 75 international members, included 46 vessel operators, owners and management, and 60 expedition cruise vessels that are organized by AECO, represent the great majority of these operations in the Arctic.

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