

# Thinking of flying a drone in Antarctica?

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## Read this before travelling....

IAATO is cautioning all Antarctic travellers intending to fly a drone, or Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) for any purpose in Antarctica to check with their tour operator or travel agent as far in advance of travel as possible. Note that IAATO Members have agreed that they will not allow the recreational use of UAVs in the unique, and often wildlife rich, coastal areas of Antarctica until more is known about their responsible use. The ban will be reviewed annually, in May, to allow for potential technological advances and further developments within the regulatory community.

IAATO members allow the recreational use of authorized\* UAVs in the interior of Antarctica under strict and carefully controlled conditions.

Non-IAATO members and private expeditions should contact their relevant Competent Authority or government agency if they intend to operate a UAV anywhere in or around the continent.

Through the unique global partnership that is the Antarctic Treaty system, the entire continent is formally designated as a 'natural reserve, devoted to peace and science'. Antarctica is regarded as the last great wilderness on our planet, still pristine with wildlife and landscapes that show little evidence of direct human activity. To visit, and operate in, an environment like this comes with a responsibility to do so carefully and with minimal impact.

\*Ultimately, this means that **all** human activities, whether for science or tourism, have to go through an Environmental Impact Assessment by a relevant Competent Authority/government agency. Critically, IAATO Member operators have agreed that their activities must have less than a minor or transitory impact on the environment. They submit permit applications annually to their Competent Authority/government agency and, if their planned activities meet all criteria, they are authorized and a permit granted.

IAATO member operators must include an application to fly UAVs within their overall permit application. The difficulty for prospective UAV pilots is that Treaty Parties, and IAATO members, are concerned about their use in Antarctica; flying drones is a relatively new activity and while there are situations when they may be of value (e.g. science, ice reconnaissance for vessel navigation, education, including documentary film making), there are many questions still to be answered in terms of their potential impact on the environment. The use of UAVs is therefore in a state of development and, until more information is available, both the Competent Authorities and IAATO Member Operators are taking a

precautionary approach when it comes to their operation. The intention is to devise a pragmatic policy framework that will allow safe and environmentally responsible use under controlled circumstances.

If you wish to use a UAV in Antarctica for *any* purpose, please discuss this with the operator you intend to travel with **before departure**, as far in advance as possible.

*Revised Dec 2017*