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A Catalogue of IAATO Operator Activities

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Summary

All IAATO Operator activities in Antarctica are permitted or authorized through Environmental Impact Assessments (or equivalent), Advance Notifications and, where relevant, Waste Management Permits, submitted in advance of the season. All activities are planned to have no more than a minor or transitory impact on the Antarctic environment, and nearly all currently undertaken activities have been safely and successfully conducted for more than a decade. All activities are recorded and submitted to the Treaty Parties as part of the Post Visit Reporting System.

Background

During the 2019 CEP Antarctic Tourism Workshop held in Rotterdam, Netherlands, the “increasing diversity of recreational activities being undertaken in Antarctica” was one of the three main topics of discussion. See *ATCM XLII WP19 Antarctic Tourism Workshop, 3-5 April in Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Chair’s Summary and Key Recommendations*. Treaty Parties in attendance noted that it would be beneficial for them to have a better understanding of the range of activities IAATO Operators currently undertake in Antarctica to give them a clearer sense of what those activities entail. This paper is in response to that request.

Introduction

All IAATO Operators seek the authorization of their Competent Authority for any activities they plan to undertake by submitting Environmental Impact Assessments or equivalent, Advance Notifications and, where relevant, Waste Management Permits, in advance of the season. Because of the inevitable variations in the requirements between Competent Authorities, IAATO endeavors to ensure that their Operators work on a level playing field by requiring them to supply Advance Notifications and Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) even if their Competent Authority does not impose that requirement. In line with IAATO’s mission, all activities are planned to have no more than a minor or transitory impact on the Antarctic environment. To maintain membership in good standing, operations must be conducted in a safe and environmentally responsible manner, something that IAATO has held as a primary goal since the association’s founding in 1991. Equally, as all IAATO Operators and their field staff share the strong belief that carefully managed first hand experiences are irreplaceable in creating a group of ambassadors committed to supporting the continued protection of Antarctica, every tourist’s visit, whatever activities they undertake, is designed to promote knowledge and understanding of Antarctica.

IAATO maintains an extensive database in order to understand long-term trends to facilitate decision-making about the responsible management of its Operators’ activities. Data are collected through Post Visit Reports (PVR) submitted to the IAATO Secretariat and collated into an annual statistics overview. These are shared with Antarctic Treaty Parties to inform and assist with their work in managing human activity in the region.

As an example, what follows here is a catalogue of the IAATO Operator activities recorded by IAATO in the Post Visit Reports for 2018-2019 season, along with very brief explanations of what the activity entails. Noting that all activities are described in much greater detail in each Operator’s EIA including locations, routes, equipment carried, mitigation measures in place etc. IAATO offers these lists as a basis for continued dialogue with Competent Authorities, Antarctic Treaty Party representatives, members of the CEP and others working toward a common understanding of human activity in Antarctica.

Catalogue of Activities as documented in the Post Visit Reports filed by IAATO Operators

**Indicates that an ATCM or IAATO Activity Guideline is in existence.*

Fixed Wing Aircraft Landing: Landing on any form of runway.

Anchoring: Anchoring the principal vessel.

Ski Kiting: A single person or a team traversing on skis while being pulled by kites, usually with sleds.

Motorised Traverse: Traverse by motorised vehicle, with or without sleds.

Ski Traverse: A single person or a team traversing by skis with sleds.

Camping*: Establishing a small, temporary field camp for one or several nights in tents or bivouacs in a location away from an Operator's main operations hub. (see also short overnight stays)

Citizen Science: Participating in a project classified as citizen science where scientific data collection is undertaken by amateur (non-professional) scientists, for use by science professionals.

Climbing/ Mountaineering/Ice Climbing: Climbing mountains, nunataks or ice features with guides, the length of the trip can range from a few hours to multi-day expeditions.

Cross-country Skiing: backcountry skiing (often with skins to allow uphill travel) – this can be over short or long distances.

Cycling: The use of specialist large-wheeled trail (fat-tire) bicycles to cross areas of ice, slush and snow.

Day Trip King George Island: A round trip flight to King George Island, where the passengers are on the ground for a few hours and partake in station visit(s) and/or a visit to the northeast beach of Ardley Island.

Deep Field Flights: Intercontinental flights.

Emperor Penguin Colony Visits*: Visiting an Emperor Penguin colony.

Expedition Support: Support offered to various types of expeditions (transport, communications, gear caching, SAR support, etc) by vessels or air Operators.

Extended Walk: A walk which moves beyond the immediate vicinity of a landing (usually over 1km).

Filming: Film-makers capturing the Antarctic environment on film for educational, entertainment, or other commercial purposes.

Fixed Wing and Helicopter Flight: A flight which takes off from and returns to the same location without landing elsewhere.

Gear Depoting: Caching gear (SAR equipment, fuel, etc) in strategic locations for later use.

Helicopter Landing: Landing on any form of landing pad.

Ice Landing: Landing onto ice (whether of sea or land origin), either from a vessel, tender, or helicopter.

Ice Walk: Walking on ice (whether of sea or land origin) to a destination away from a vessel, tender or helicopter landing area.

Kayaking*: Moving through the water in a kayak.

Last 1-2 Degree Expeditions: Using a form of transportation (motor vehicle, skis, kite, etc) to travel the last 1 or 2 degrees to the Pole.

Marathon*: Running a marathon in Antarctica over a pre-designated route.

Medical Evacuation*: Medical casualty evacuated from Antarctica, either by aircraft or vessel.

Overnight Stay King George Island: After flying into King George Island, a one-night stay is undertaken before flying back the following day.

Polar Plunge: A short immersion into Antarctic waters, usually done by jumping off a platform or wading in from a beach.

Remote Underwater Vehicle (ROV)*: Exploring underwater using a remotely operated vehicle, which is tethered to a support vessel.

RPAS Commercial Flight*: Piloting an RPAS for commercial use, usually for documentary or marketing purposes.

RPAS Navigation Assistance Flight*: Piloting an RPAS to aid a vessel in navigation through Antarctic waters.

RPAS Scientific Flight: Piloting an RPAS for scientific data collection, usually done by scientific researchers who are operating off the vessel.

Science Support: Support functions in the field, usually logistical, to scientific community.

Scuba Diving*: Using a self-contained underwater breathing apparatus (scuba), completely independent of surface supply, to explore underwater.

Ship Cruise: Sailing through Antarctic near coastal waters without leaving the principal vessel.

Short Overnight Stays*: Vessels offering a near shore camping experience, using tents or bivouacs, overnight with no meals ashore.

Skiing and Snowboarding: Ascending and descending a snow-covered slope.

Skydiving: Tandem or solo free fall skydiving from an aircraft before landing by parachute.

Small Boat Cruising: Small boat (Zodiacs, Polar cirkels, etc.) ride to observe the Antarctic environment.

Small Boat Landing: Small boats (Zodiacs, Polar cirkels, etc.) taking guests for a landing in Antarctic coastal areas.

Snorkelling*: Swimming to observe underwater while equipped with a diving mask and snorkel.

Snowshoeing: Hiking with snowshoes so that the person's feet do not sink into the snow.

South Pole Fly-in: Flight to South Pole for a short stop for visits to the geographic and ceremonial South Poles.

South Pole Ski Expeditions: Expeditions which ski to the South Pole and end their expedition there or ski back to their starting point.

South Pole Motorised Expeditions: Expeditions which use a motor vehicle (wheeled or tracked) to drive to the South Pole. The expedition can either end at the South Pole or return to the starting point.

Stand Up Paddle Boarding: Standing on boards and using a paddle to propel oneself through the water.

Station Visit*: Tour of National Antarctic Program station with permissions arranged in advance.

Submersible (HOV)*: An untethered watercraft designed to operate underwater with occupants inside.

Swimming – Distance: Swimming to travel a distance (usually 500m – 2km).

Vinson Massif Climb: Climbing part or all of Vinson Massif with mountaineering guides.