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IAATO Overview of Antarctic Vessel Tourism: The 2023-24 Season, and Preliminary Estimates for 2024-25

IAATO Overview of Antarctic Vessel Tourism: The 2023-24 Season, and Preliminary Estimates for 2024-25

Information Paper Submitted by the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO)

Introduction

IAATO is pleased to provide the statistical data compiled from Post Visit Reports for the 2023-24 season and the preliminary estimates for 2024-25 season as of 08 May 2024.

We also take this opportunity to build on discussions with different Treaty Parties around growth and diversification of activities, by including a historical perspective which may aid ongoing considerations. The data presented throughout this paper is based on information provided to IAATO by its Operators in Post Visit Reports (PVRs). Visitor numbers reflect only those travelling with IAATO Operator companies and do not include Observers, Government Officials, or those individuals taking part in research projects that are being supported by IAATO Operators. It also does not include information from any non-IAATO operators.

IAATO's membership continues to encompass the majority of private-sector tour operators. All IAATO Operator activities in Antarctica are permitted or authorized by Competent Authorities through Environmental Impact Assessments (or equivalent), Advance Notifications and, where relevant, Waste Management Permits, submitted in advance of the season. IAATO operators strive for safe and responsible operations in the Antarctic Treaty area and plan activities that will have no more than a minor or transitory environmental impact. For further information on IAATO Activities see ATCM 46 (2024) IP107 A Catalogue of IAATO Operator Activities.

1.0 Historical Overview on Managing for Growth

1.1 IAATO Member Activities and Managing for Growth

The growth of the Antarctic tourism industry is a topic of great interest within the Antarctic and worldwide communities. In past three decades, IAATO has seen several periods of growth. During each of these periods of growth, and in the intervening breaks, IAATO has implemented a series of tourism management measures, many of which were subsequently adopted by the ATCPs. With advancements in technology, reporting and communications, and building on lessons learned in the past, IAATO has been able to accurately forecast and monitor growth, making measured decisions and advancements to properly position the organization as changes happen, and be fleet-of-foot to respond as appropriate.

As forecasted in ATCM XLV (2023) IP156 *IAATO Overview of Antarctic Vessel Tourism: The 2022-23 Season, and Preliminary Estimates for 2023-24*, the 2023-24 activity levels exceeded the 2022-23 season. Anticipating the continued increase in numbers of passengers and vessels, IAATO continues to strengthen, test, and refine its suite of 'tools' to ensure the continued successful management of activities such as those listed in ATCM 46 (2024) IP101 *IAATO Annual Report*.

It was decided at ATCM XLV "to start a dedicated process to develop a comprehensive and consistent. framework for the regulation of tourism and other non-governmental activities in Antarctica" (Decision 6 (2023)). IAATO looks forward to collaborating around tourism management as discussions on the development of a comprehensive and consistent framework for Antarctic tourism and other non-governmental activities continue. For further information see IP111 *IAATO Considerations During the Development of a Tourism Framework*.

Incremental changes on existing tools have been made during the past ten years to address the continued increase in activities. Figures 1.1 - 1.3 give an overview of some of the key growth management tools introduced by IAATO during periods of growth between 1993-Present.

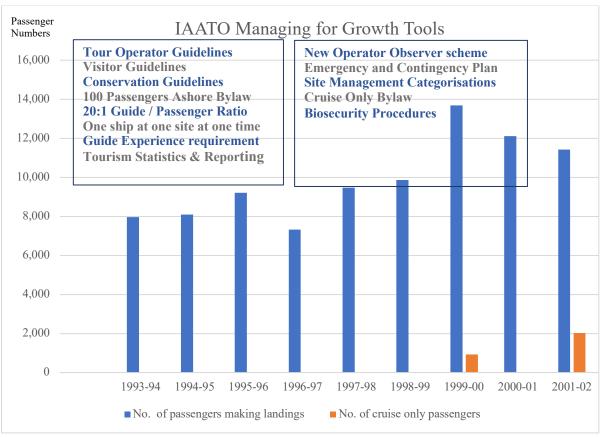


Figure 1.1: Examples of IAATO management tools introduced in response to growth between 1993 and 2001

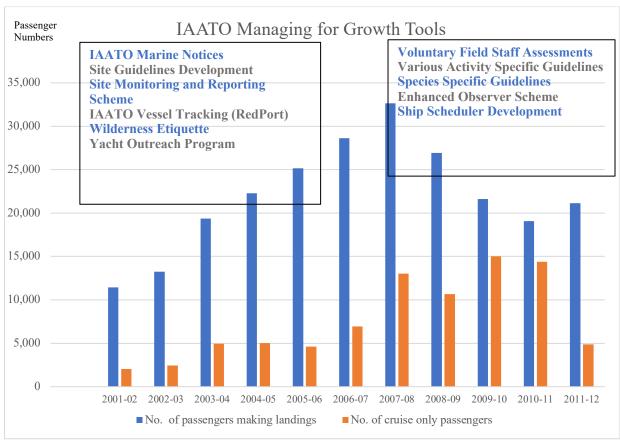


Figure 1.2: Examples of IAATO management tools introduced in response to growth between 2001 and 2011

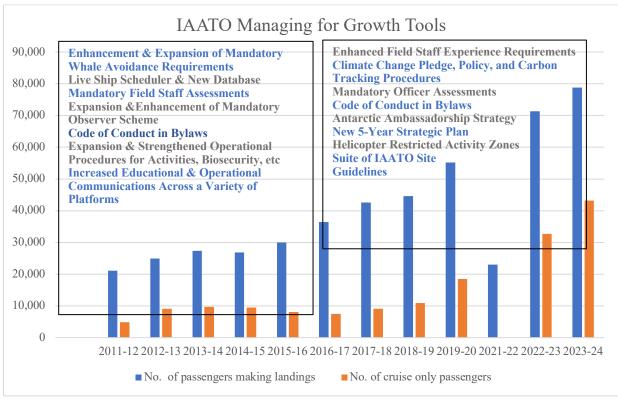


Figure 1.3: IAATO management tools introduced in response to growth between 2011 – Present (2020-21 season excluded).

1.2 IAATO Member Nationalities

The Post Visit Report Forms submitted to IAATO indicate that more than 200 different nationalities were represented by tourists who visited the Antarctic during the 2023-24 season. *Table 1*. offers a summary of the 2023-24 season nationalities by percentage.

Nationality	Percentage of Total 2023-24 Season
USA	44.6%
Australia	7.8%
China	7.6%
United Kingdom	7.0%
Canada	5.9%
Germany	4.5%
Argentina	2.5%
Brazil	2.3%
France	1.8%
Mexico	1.0%
Other	15%

Table 1: Percentage of Passenger Nationalities

Reflecting on the latest period of growth, 2014-2023, the Post Visit Reports submitted to IAATO indicate the top 10 nationalities who visited Antarctica have remained relatively consistent over the last ten seasons, although proportionately and prior to the pandemic, China had seen the greatest increase in travelers to Antarctica. An overview of the last 10 years can be found in *Figure 2*.

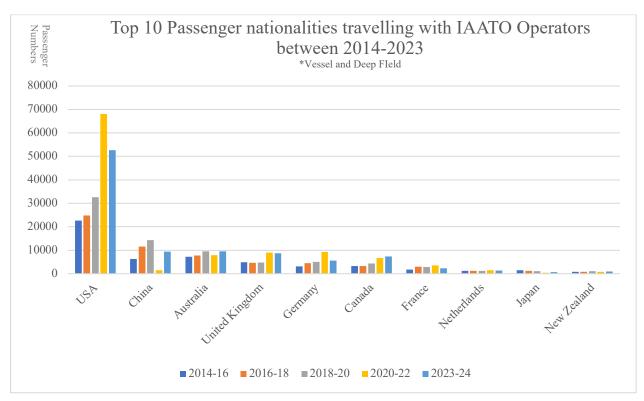


Figure 2: Top 10 Passenger nationalities (vessel and deep field) travelling with IAATO operators between 2014-2023

2.0 IAATO Vessel Operations Overview

This section focuses on IAATO Vessel Operations and includes yacht activities.

For Deep Field and Air Operator information please refer to ATCM 46 (2024) IP103 IAATO Deep Field and Air Overview of Antarctic Tourism: 2023-24 Season and Preliminary Estimates for 2024-25 Season.

2.1 IAATO Vessel Activities

For the last 31 years shipborne tourism on the Peninsula has been the dominant vector of travel. The vast majority of tourism voyages (98%) operate in the Antarctic Peninsula region during the seven-month austral summer season (from October to April), and depart from Ushuaia, Argentina or, to a lesser extent, from other ports north of the Antarctic Treaty Area.

During the 2023-24 season, all commercial SOLAS passenger ship Operators conducting tourism activities in the Antarctic Treaty Area were members of IAATO.

Table 2. offers a summary of the last decade 2013-2023 of both IAATO SOLAS and non-SOLAS vessel tourism (including Yachts and Cruise Only).

Table 2. 10-Year Statistics of Seaborne Tourism (including Yachts and Cruise Only)

Based on IAATO Post Visit Reports, excluding 2020-21.

Year	No. of operators	No. of ships & yachts	No. of voyages	No. of passengers making landings	No. of cruise only passengers
2013-14	42	51	283	27,735	9,670
2014-15	37	44	267	27,243	9,459
2015-16	38	48	290	30,369	8,109
2016-17	38	47	308	36,938	7,475
2017-18	44	50	354	42,711	9,131
2018-19	44	56	406	44,619	10,889
2019-20	47	62	414	55,875	18,506
2021-22	40	48	243	23,508	0
2022-23	50	70	542	71,362	32,730

2023-24	55	77	569	78,848	43,224

In accordance with IAATO Bylaws Article X – Section B, all Operators and Provisional Operators are to comply with operational conditions pursuant to the Antarctic Treaty System, including the Antarctic Treaty and the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, along with IMO Conventions and similar international and national laws and agreements.

2.2 Scope of IAATO Vessel Activities

Commercial tourist activities included the operation of small inflatable boats (Zodiac, R.I.B., Naiad, etc.), shore landings, and to a lesser extent activity such as, but not limited to, kayaking, climbing, and short overnight stays.

Through the years descriptions and the type of activities have been expanded in the Post Visit Reports to facilitate greater accuracy for reporting and planning. For instance, RPAS Flights, although banned recreationally in coastal waters by IAATO, has been expanded to differentiate between commercial, scientific, and operational/navigation flights. Likewise, what was once described as swimming, has now been expanded to swimming – distance and polar plunge.

Representing the current expansion of descriptions during this last period of growth, *Figure 3* illustrates activities offered by IAATO vessels including yachts, during the 2023-2024 season. Small boat cruising and landings remain the most popular activities (24%) for vessels, while scenic ship cruising also remains a key activity. A range of other activities (e.g., kayaking, and short overnight stays) contribute to a smaller portion (10%) of off-ship activities. It is anticipated that ship cruising, small boat cruising and small boat landings will continue to be the dominant activities and other activities will remain small scale in comparison.

For more information on IAATO Operator activities see ATCM 46 (2024) IP107 A Catalogue of IAATO Operator Activities.

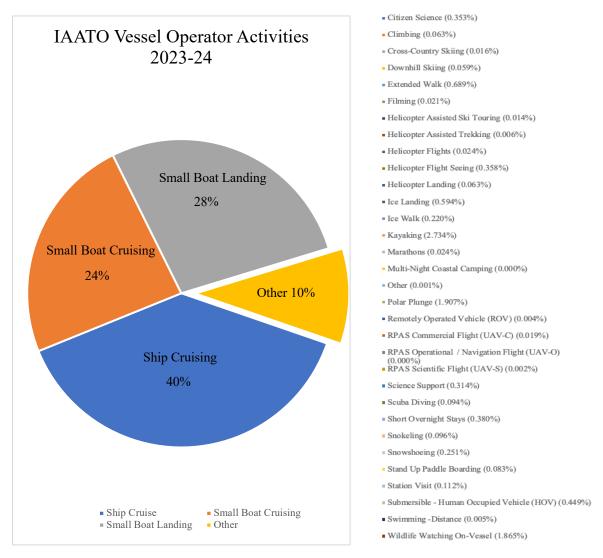


Figure 3: Commercial Operated Activities Conducted from Expedition Vessels and Yachts for 2023-24

4.0 Preliminary Estimate of Planned Vessel Activities for the 2024-25 Season

Preliminary estimates for Vessels, found in Appendix 2, for the 2024-25 season are as of 08 May, 2024. These estimates represent the anticipated operating scenario for the 2024-25 season.

5.0 Tourism Statistics

IAATO has been collating data from its members regarding visits to Antarctica for three decades. During that time, changes have been made in the data collected which encompass more detailed activity categories as well as updates to site names. Until recent years, the collating was done manually. Increased capabilities in technology have allowed large data sets to be analyzed more effectively and quicker than previously possible. This has brought to IAATO's attention certain anomalies in the data (i.e. terrestrial landings at marine only sites). Therefore IAATO strongly recommends users to utilize the most recent information available from IAATO when performing analysis.

To request IAATO data please visit: https://iaato.org/information-resources/data-statistics/

Appendices:

- Appendix 1: Overview of Antarctic Vessel Tourism 2023-24 (As of 08 May 2024)
- Appendix 2: Preliminary Estimate of Antarctic Vessel Tourism 2024-2025 (As of 08 May 2024)

Appendix 1: Overview of Antarctic Tourism 2023-24 (As of 08 May 2024)

SUMMARY OF ACTUALS for 2023-2024 SEASON	
(All tourist types)	

Types of Tourism	Number of Vessels	Number of Departures	Total Number of Passengers
IAATO Traditional			
Seaborne Tourism	51	429	71,380
Peninsula			
IAATO Seaborne			
Tourism Ross Sea /	5	9	1,251
Continental			
IAATO Sailing Vessels			
/ Yacht Tourism	9	16	87
Peninsula			
IAATO Vessel/Yacht	19	91	6,130
Air-Cruise Peninsula	19	91	0,130
IAATO Large Ships/	9	24	42.224
Cruise - Only Peninsula	9	24	43,224
		Total	122,072

IAATO Members Traditional Seaborne Tourism - Peninsula Region - 2023-2024					
Vessel	Operator / Charterer	Country	Actual # Voyages	Actual # of Passengers	
Bark Europa	Rederij Bark EUROPA B.V.	Netherlands	4	138	
Expedition	G Adventures	Canada	13	1643	
Exploris One	EXPLORIS	France	5	360	
Fram	Hurtigruten Expeditions	Norway	8	1195	
Greg Mortimer	Aurora Expeditions	Australia	4	412	
Hamburg	Plantours Kreuzfahrten	Germany	3	928	
HANSEATIC inspiration	Hapag-Lloyd Cruises	Germany	5	966	
HANSEATIC spirit	Hapag-Lloyd Cruises	Germany	3	575	
Hondius	Oceanwide Expeditions	Netherlands	9	1320	
Island Sky	Noble Caledonia	United Kingdom	2	206	
L'Austral	Ponant	France	10	1705	
Le Boreal	Ponant	France	12	1802	
Le Commandant Charcot	Ponant	France	5	864	
Le Lyrial	Abercrombie & Kent USA, LLC	United States	3	405	
Le Lyrial	Ponant	France	6	968	

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Legend	EYOS Expeditions Ltd.	United States	1	13
Magellan Explorer	Antarctica21	Chile	3	254
MS Fridtjof Nansen	Hurtigruten Expeditions	Norway	14	5045
MS Roald Amundsen	Hurtigruten Expeditions	Norway	11	3385
MV Polar Pioneer	Polar Pioneer Management AS	Norway	7	276
National Geographic Endurance	Lindblad Expeditions	United States	5	629
National Geographic Explorer	Lindblad Expeditions	United States	10	1242
National Geographic Resolution	Lindblad Expeditions	United States	8	1001
Ocean Adventurer	Quark Expeditions	United States	7	802
Ocean Albatros	Albatros Expeditions	United States	14	2129
Ocean Endeavour	Intrepid	Australia	12	2322
Ocean Nova	Antarctica21	Chile	2	138
Ocean Nova	Grands Espaces	France	1	61
Ocean Victory	Albatros Expeditions	United States	13	2191
Ortelius	Oceanwide Expeditions	Netherlands	10	1026
Plancius	Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris	United States	1	92
Plancius	Oceanwide Expeditions	Netherlands	8	784
Scenic Eclipse	Scenic Tours (USA) Inc	United States	10	1630
Scenic Eclipse II	Scenic Tours (USA) Inc	United States	7	1065
Sea Spirit	Poseidon Expeditions	United States	10	948
Seabourn Pursuit	Seabourn Cruise Line Ltd.	United States	10	2455
Seabourn Quest	Seabourn Cruise Line Ltd.	United States	1	385
Seabourn Venture	Seabourn Cruise Line Ltd.	United States	9	2140
Seaventure	Polar Latitudes	United States	11	1321
SH Diana	Swan Hellenic	United States	8	1249
SH Vega	Swan Hellenic	United States	13	1479
Silver Cloud	Silversea Cruises Ltd.	United States	8	1652
Silver Endeavour	Silversea Cruises Ltd.	United States	7	1372
Silver Wind	Silversea Cruises Ltd.	United States	8	1820
Sylvia Earle	Aurora Expeditions	Australia	10	956
The World	ROW Management, LTD	United States	3	625
Ultramarine	Quark Expeditions	United States	12	2049
Ushuaia	Antarpply Expeditions	Argentina	15	1244
Viking Octantis	Viking Expedition LTD	Norway	11	3860
Viking Polaris	Viking Expedition LTD	Norway	10	3562

		Totals:	429	71380
World Voyager	Atlas Ocean Voyages	United States	11	1575
World Traveller	Atlas Ocean Voyages	United States	12	1759
World Navigator	Atlas Ocean Voyages	United States	13	1752
World Explorer	Quark Expeditions	United States	11	1605

Vessel	Operator / Charterer	Country	Actual # Voyages	Actual # of Passengers
Gene Chaser	Spirit of Sydney Expeditions	Australia	1	7
Greg Mortimer	Aurora Expeditions	Australia	5	575
Infinite Jest	EYOS Expeditions Ltd.	United States	1	10
Jester	EYOS Expeditions Ltd.	United States	1	5
La Datcha	EYOS Expeditions Ltd.	United States	3	36
Legend	EYOS Expeditions Ltd.	United States	4	59
M/V Betanzos	EYOS Expeditions Ltd.	United States	1	12
Magellan Explorer	Antarctica21	Chile	19	1383
MY Gene Machine	Spirit of Sydney Expeditions	Australia	1	8
MY Hans Hansson	Quixote Expeditions	United States	4	42
MY Hanse Explorer	"Hanse Explorer" GmbH & Co. KG	Germany	7	59
Ocean Adventurer	Quark Expeditions	United States	6	702
Ocean Nova	Antarctica21	Chile	16	1022
S/V Australis	Ocean Expeditions LLC	Australia	2	10
S/V Ocean Tramp	Quixote Expeditions	United States	6	38
Silver Endeavour	Silversea Cruises Ltd.	Unites States	7	1272
Sylvia Earle	Aurora Expeditions	Australia	2	210
World Explorer	Quark Expeditions	United States	3	415
World Voyager	Atlas Ocean Voyages	United States	2	265
		Totals:	91*	613

*There were 106 Southbound Flights into Teniente Rodolfo Marsh Martin Airstrip to support the 91 voyages

IAATO Members Yacht Tourism - Peninsula Region - 2023-2024					
Vessel	Operator / Charterer	Country	Actual # Voyages	Actual # of Passengers	
Infinite Jest	EYOS Expeditions Ltd.		1	0	
Jester	EYOS Expeditions Ltd.		1	0	
La Datcha	EYOS Expeditions Ltd.	United States	2	21	
MY Hans Hansson	Quixote Expeditions	United States	2	7	
S/V Podorange	Voile Australe	Poland	2	13	

S/V Santa Maria Australis	SIM Expeditions	Germany	3	15
S/V Selma Expeditions	Selma Expeditions	Poland	2	16
S/V Spirit of Sydney	Spirit of Sydney Expeditions	Australia	1	4
Tecla	Tecla Sailing	Netherlands	2	11
		Totals:	16	87

IAATO Cruise Only Tourism - Peninsula Region - 2023-2024				
Vessel	Operator / Charterer	Country	Actual # Voyages	Actual # of Passengers
Azamara Quest	Azamara		2	688
Celebrity Eclipse	Celebrity Cruise Lines/Royal Caribbean Group	United States	4	10878
M/V Norwegian Star	Norwegian Cruise Lines Holdings	United States	5	11886
M/V Seven Seas Voyager	Norwegian Cruise Lines Holdings	United States	2	1203
MS Marina	Norwegian Cruise Lines Holdings	United States	3	3190
Oosterdam	Holland America Line	United States	3	5406
Sapphire Princess	Princess Cruises	United States	3	7423
Serenade of the Seas	Celebrity Cruise Lines/Royal Caribbean Group	United States	1	1602
Zaandam	Holland America Line	United States	1	948
		Totals:	24	43224

IAATO Members Seaborne Tourism – Continental/Ross Sea - 2023-2024					
Vessel	Operator / Charterer	Country	Actual # Voyages	Actual # of Passengers	
HANSEATIC spirit	Hapag-Lloyd Cruises	Germany	1	190	
Heritage Adventurer	Heritage Expeditions	New Zealand	2	214	
Le Commandant Charcot	Ponant	France	2	289	
Le Soleal	Ponant	France	2	340	
National Geographic Endurance	Lindblad Expeditions	United States	2	218	
		Totals:	9	1251	

Appendix 2: Preliminary Estimate of Antarctic Tourism 2024-2025 (As of 08 May 2024)

SUMMARY OF ESTIMATES for 2024-2025 SEASON

(All tourist types)

*Note all numbers and company status are subject to change and are preliminary estimates only

Types of Tourism	Number of Vessels	Number of Departures	Total Number of Passengers
IAATO Traditional Seaborne Tourism Peninsula	45	419	69,059
IAATO Seaborne Tourism Ross Sea / Continental	4	8	1,150
IAATO Sailing Vessels / Yacht Tourism Peninsula	10	20	162
IAATO Yacht/Vessel Air-Cruise Peninsula	14	101	8,539
IAATO Large Ships/ Cruise - Only Peninsula	7	21	28,360
		Total	107,270

IAATO Members Traditional Seaborne Tourism - Peninsula Region - 2024-2025					
Vessel	Operator / Charterer	Competent Authority	Est. # Voyages	Est. # of Passengers	
Bark Europa	Rederij Bark EUROPA B.V.	Netherlands	5	170	
Expedition	G Adventures	Canada	13	1573	
Exploris One	EXPLORIS	France	5	500	
Fram	Hurtigruten Expeditions	Norway	8	1400	
Greg Mortimer	Aurora Expeditions	Australia	9	900	
HANSEATIC inspiration	Hapag-Lloyd Cruises	Germany	3	510	
HANSEATIC nature	Hapag-Lloyd Cruises	Germany	6	1020	

HANSEATIC spirit	Hapag-Lloyd Cruises	Germany	6	1020
Hondius	Oceanwide Expeditions	Netherlands	10	1700
Island Sky	Noble Caledonia	United Kingdom	4	400
L'Austral	Ponant	France	9	1125
Le Boreal	Ponant	France	10	1250
Le Lyrial	Abercrombie & Kent USA, LLC	United States	3	480
Le Lyrial	Ponant	France	8	1000
Magellan Explorer	Antarctica21	Chile	4	240
MS Fridtjof Nansen	Hurtigruten Expeditions	Norway	14	5600
MS Roald Amundsen	Hurtigruten Expeditions	Norway	11	3850
National Geographic Endurance	Lindblad Expeditions	United States	11	1485
National Geographic Explorer	Lindblad Expeditions	United States	2	280
National Geographic Resolution	Lindblad Expeditions	United States	12	1620
Ocean Albatros	Albatros Expeditions	United States	15	2700
Ocean Endeavour	Intrepid	Australia	12	2220
Ocean Explorer	Quark Expeditions	United States	8	792
Ocean Nova	Antarctica21	Chile	3	165
Ocean Nova	Grands Espaces	France	1	65
Ocean Victory	Albatros Expeditions	United States	13	2340
Ortelius	Oceanwide Expeditions	Netherlands	10	1000
Plancius	Oceanwide Expeditions	Netherlands	10	1000
Scenic Eclipse	Scenic Tours (USA) Inc	United States	8	1200
Sea Spirit	Poseidon Expeditions	United States	10	730
Seabourn Pursuit	Seabourn Cruise Line Ltd.	United States	11	2475
Seabourn Venture	Seabourn Cruise Line Ltd.	United States	9	2025
Seaventure	Polar Latitudes	United States	12	1440
SH Diana	Swan Hellenic	United States	9	864
SH Vega	Swan Hellenic	United States	11	836
Silver Cloud	Silversea Cruises Ltd.	United States	11	2255
Silver Endeavour	Silversea Cruises Ltd.	United States	5	930
Silver Wind	Silversea Cruises Ltd.	United States	9	2079
Sylvia Earle	Aurora Expeditions	Australia	8	800
Ultramarine	Quark Expeditions	United States	11	1639
Ushuaia	Antarpply Expeditions	Argentina	16	1200
Viking Octantis	Viking Expedition LTD	Norway	8	3024
Viking Polaris	Viking Expedition LTD	Norway	9	3402
World Explorer	Quark Expeditions	United States	11	1419
			-	

		Totals:	419	69059
World Voyager	Atlas Ocean Voyages	United States	9	1584
World Traveller	Atlas Ocean Voyages	United States	14	2464
World Navigator	Atlas Ocean Voyages	United States	13	2288

IAATO Members Air-Cruise Tourism - Peninsula Region - 2024-2025				
Vessel	Operator / Charterer	Country	Est. # Voyages	Est. # of Passengers
Greg Mortimer	Aurora Expeditions	Australia	4	400
Legend	EYOS Expeditions Ltd.	United States	4	88
Magellan Explorer	Antarctica21	Chile	20	1200
MY Hans Hansson	Quixote Expeditions	United States	5	60
MY Hanse Explorer	"Hanse Explorer" GmbH & Co. KG	Germany	4	40
National Geographic Explorer	Lindblad Expeditions	United States	15	2100
Ocean Explorer	Quark Expeditions	United States	4	396
Ocean Nova	Antarctica21	Chile	16	880
Octopus	EYOS Expeditions Ltd.	United States	3	36
S/V Ocean Tramp	Quixote Expeditions	United States	5	35
Silver Endeavour	Silversea Cruises Ltd.	United States	10	1860
Sylvia Earle	Aurora Expeditions	Australia	4	400
World Explorer	Quark Expeditions	United States	4	516
World Voyager	Atlas Ocean Voyages	United States	3	528
		Totals:	101	8539

IAATO Members Yacht Tourism - Peninsula Region - 2024-2025					
Vessel	Operator / Charterer	Country	Est. # Voyages	Est. # of Passengers	
MY Game Changer	EYOS Expeditions Ltd.	United States	2	12	
Rocinante	EYOS Expeditions Ltd.	United States	2	24	
S/V Australis	Ocean Expeditions LLC	United States	3	27	
S/V Ocean Tramp	Quixote Expeditions	United States	1	7	
S/V Podorange	Voile Australe	Poland	2	14	

Vinson of Antarctica	Pelagic Expeditions LTD	United Kingdom Totals:	20	8
Tecla	Tecla Sailing	Netherlands	2	20
S/V Vaïhéré	Latitude Oceane	Belgium	1	8
S/V Spirit of Sydney	Spirit of Sydney Expeditions	Australia	3	18
S/V Selma Expeditions	Selma Expeditions	Poland	3	24

IAATO Cruise Only Tourism - Peninsula Region - 2024-2025				
Vessel	Operator / Charterer	Country	Est. # Voyages	Est. # of Passengers
Azamara Journey	Azamara		1	600
M/V Seven Seas Voyager	Norwegian Cruise Lines Holdings	United States	2	1396
MS Marina	Norwegian Cruise Lines Holdings	United States	5	6240
Sapphire Princess	Princess Cruises	United States	4	10712
Seven Seas Mariner	Norwegian Cruise Lines Holdings	United States	1	700
Seven Seas Splendor	Norwegian Cruise Lines Holdings	United States	4	2984
Volendam	Holland America Line	United States	4	5728
		Totals:	21	28360

IAATO Members Seaborne Tourism – Continental/Ross Sea - 2024-2025				
Vessel	Operator / Charterer	Country	Est. # Voyages	Est. # of Passengers
HANSEATIC inspiration	Hapag-Lloyd Cruises		1	170
Heritage Adventurer	Heritage Expeditions		2	280
Le Soleal	Ponant		2	250
Scenic Eclipse II	Scenic Tours (USA) Inc		3	450
		Totals:	8	1150

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