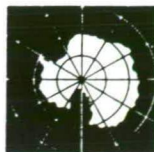


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TOURISM IN ANTARCTICA
GUIDELINES FOR A LOW-IMPACT PRESENCE

(Submitted by IAATO)

TOURISM IN ANTARCTICA - GUIDELINES FOR A LOW-IMPACT PRESENCE

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ABSTRACT

Commercial tourism in Antarctica began in the late 1950's, and by mid-to late 1980's the tour operators were actively engaged in bringing increasing numbers of tourists to the continent. An estimated 6,400 tourists visited Antarctica in the 1991-92 Austral summer. The first vessel built specifically for this purpose, the ice-strengthened Lindblad Explorer in 1969, paved the way for people to visit and enjoy the world's last pristine continent. However, the total number of tourists that have visited Antarctica to date is still less than the sold-out attendance at a single game in a major football stadium in the U.S.

Recognizing the value and importance of the continent for scientific research, as well as a place to be shared and enjoyed by others, commercial tour operators formed the international Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) in 1991. The seven North American founding members of IAATO (and new members that joined in 1992), pledge to abide by the U.S. Antarctic Conservation Act of 1978, and to adhere to the industry-generated Antarctic Visitor and Tour Operator guidelines. The latter were drafted by some of the operators in 1988, based on management procedures already in effect for years. These guidelines specifically address practices that minimize potential impact of human presence in a continent that is particularly vulnerable to any intrusion. It is thus hoped that regulations pertaining to tourism, some in effect and others presently being discussed by Antarctic Treaty nations, will form the basis for thoughtful and meaningful legislation that will not only protect the environment but also be compatible with responsible tourism of all kinds.

A brief history of tourism in Antarctica will be presented, followed by a description of each of the tour operator and visitor guidelines, and the By-Laws and Objectives of IAATO.

HISTORY

It is difficult to determine when the first tourist went to Antarctica, because one first has to define a "tourist". (Tourist = one who tours, or travels, for pleasure; Tourism = traveling as a recreation; the activities, businesses, etc., providing services for or profiting or benefiting from tourists). According to some historians, tourism in Antarctica began in 1958 with the first ship traveling there for that purpose (Reich, 1980; Enzenbacher, 1992). The concept of "expedition cruising", coupled with education as a major theme, began with Lars-Eric Lindblad in 1966. In 1969, Lindblad had the first ice-strengthened tourist ship built, the Lindblad Explorer, and sailed her to Antarctica on the first of many such cruises. Other ships and tour operators followed, and by the late 1980's, there were at least four ships operating in Antarctica. In the 1991-1992 austral summer, there were ten ships operating there for exclusively tourism reasons. The capacity of these ships ranged from about 95 passengers (Society Explorer) to 400 (Ocean Princess). Depending on the duration of each cruise and its timetable in the operating season (November - March), a maximum potential of about 6,400 shipborne tourists might have gone to Antarctica in the 1991-1992 austral summer (Enzenbacher, this volume).

In addition to ship-based tourism in Antarctica, airborne tourism began on a large scale in 1977, when Qantas conducted overflights of the continental mainland from Sydney. These, and others by Air New Zealand, were very popular, offering low-altitude views of the continent when the aircraft reached the mainland. These flights ended in 1979-1980 when an Air New Zealand DC-10 aircraft crashed into Mount Erebus on Ross Island on November 28, 1979, killing all 257 aboard.

Another aspect of tourism includes private expeditions, many of which are conducted in the interior. Most of these are supported logistically by a private company which began operations from a seasonal field camp in 1984 at a location called Patriot Hills in the southern Heritage Range, Ellsworth Mountains. This staging area, at 80°20'S, 81°25'W, can be reached by aircraft from Punta Arenas, Chile, and in summer provides facilities for mountaineering expeditions and other adventurers to reach the geographic South Pole and other sites of interest. Mountaineers, in particular, avail themselves of this service because the highest peaks on the continent are found nearby. Details of the aircraft logistics involved in these operations are given by Swithinbank (1988, 1990, 1992, this volume).

Other ancillary aspects of tourism include private yachts, many of which concentrate their activities in the Antarctic Peninsula because of the relatively short sailing distance from South America and the Falkland Islands, and more so because of the diversity of wildlife in the area. Activities range from sightseeing to chartering services for film crews, as well supporting research studies by ATP scientists, to name a few. A chronology of many of these expeditions has been compiled by S. and J. Poncet (1991), and a review of private yacht activities was also given by Le Goff (Colmar volume).

Perhaps a more rigorous definition of tourism is necessary at this point, because a number of other individuals visit Antarctica in capacities other than those described above, and not directly related to science activities or in support of science. For example, "Distinguished Visitors" (DV's) in the U.S. Antarctic Program, which can include government officials (Congressmen or women, Senators, agency employees, etc.); journalists; National Science Foundation Antarctic Artists and Writers Program, and many others. A list of some of these categories, as well as "non-governmental activities", has been compiled by the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC Unpublished Report, 1991).

Several publications exist on the history of tourism in Antarctica, which include relevant statistics on a chronology of tourism vessels and numbers of passengers, as well as airborne tourism (Reich, 1980; Codling, 1982; Boswall, 1986; Enzenbacher, 1992, this volume). A selected bibliography of publications related to tourism in Antarctica is included here as an aid to those researching the subject.

Throughout its history, tourism in Antarctica has been very popular, as evidenced by its gradual increase in tour operators and vessels. Tourism, however, has not been as popular with some of the national research programs because of the potential for disruption of research schedules at some of the bases visited by tourists, including the need for search-and-rescue procedures in some cases (e.g., U.S. and New Zealand Antarctic Program services after the Air New Zealand DC-10 crash in 1979).

Nevertheless, tourism and research activities are generally compatible when tour vessels request permission to visit stations well in advance so as not to disrupt science and other schedules.

NEED FOR GUIDELINES

In 1989, three North American operators of ship tours to Antarctica issued joint environmental guidelines for their cruising expeditions as a means of formalizing existing shipboard practices. These companies--Mountain Travel, El Cerrito, California; Society Expeditions, Inc., Seattle, Washington; and Travel Dynamics, Inc., New York City--thus initiated environmental guidelines for both passengers and for tour operators that would become widely used in the industry. The guidelines address traveler conduct around wildlife, respect of historic relics and sites, and the unauthorized removal of keepsakes. In addition, the Guidelines explain the Antarctic Conservation Act of 1978, which governs the actions of all U.S. citizens in the Antarctic as far as protection and preservation of the ecosystem, flora and fauna are concerned.

The original Guidelines were implemented in the 1989-1990 austral summer, with briefings given to all passengers on each cruise in order to explain their importance. It is significant that these self-imposed Guidelines were initiated and widely adopted by other tour operators before comparable regulations were introduced by the Antarctic Treaty System.

Implementation by signatory nations of the "Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty", signed in Madrid in October 1991, reflects many of the Guidelines already adopted and will thus provide standardized regulations for all visitors to Antarctica. The very useful papers distributed by the United Kingdom on this subject are acknowledged for further discussion and potential revision.

The original Guidelines were modified slightly in 1992 and are included below. A set of colored slides that illustrate the Guidelines was developed by Valene Smith and has been made available to IAATO members for use in briefing passengers on tour ships to Antarctica. Printed Guidelines are now available in the four official languages of the Antarctic Treaty; (English, French, Russian, Spanish) plus German, and other languages are under consideration.

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ANTARCTICA TOUR OPERATORS (IAATO)

In 1991, the six active U.S. ship tour operators, plus Adventure Network International of Canada, founded the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators, or IAATO, as a means of pooling resources and promoting thoughtful legislation that is compatible with the responsible tourism that tour operators have exhibited in their history. Members pledge to abide by the U.S. Antarctic Conservation Act of 1978, or its equivalent in the newly signed 1991 Environmental Protocol and Annexes and to adhere to the industry-generated Guidelines of Conduct for Antarctica Visitors and Tour Operators. New members joined in 1992, raising the total membership to 13. IAATO's members strongly believe that the ultimate protection and conservation of Antarctica will largely depend on sound policy to which all Treaty nations adhere. In order to achieve the highest quality of environmental practices among tour operators, IAATO invites new operators to become members and thus adopt the Guidelines so that all are conducting tourism in an equivalent and environmentally responsible manner. Only in this way can it be assured that Antarctica will be open to visitors for many years to come.

IAATO By-Laws Article I and Objectives Article II, are listed below, along with member companies as of November 1992. The current headquarters for IAATO is at Society Expeditions, Inc., 3131 Elliott Ave., Suite 250, Seattle, Washington 98121, U.S.A. Adventure Network International, of Vancouver, B.C., Canada, is the only IAATO member that does not conduct tourism by ship, but instead provides air support and logistics for individuals in the interior of Antarctica. Their services have included support for trips to the geographic South Pole, and mountaineering expeditions, for example. A comparable set of Guidelines for their operations parallels those for tour ship operators.

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John Spletstoeser is a geologist who has participated in numerous summer field seasons in Antarctica on projects involving field mapping, ice drilling, mineral evaluation, and field logistics, beginning in 1960. He has also been a naturalist/lecturer on tourist ships to Antarctica, participating in more than 35 cruises there between 1983 and 1993. He lives in Rockland, Maine U.S.A.



Guidelines of Conduct for Antarctica Visitors

Antarctica, the world's last pristine wilderness, is particularly vulnerable to human presence. Life in Antarctica must contend with one of the harshest environments on earth, and we must take care that our presence does not add more stress to this fragile and unique ecosystem.

The following Guidelines of Conduct have been adopted by all members of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) and will be made available to all visitors traveling with them to Antarctica. With your cooperation we will be able to operate environmentally-conscious expeditions that protect and preserve Antarctica, leaving the continent unimpaired for future generations.

Please thoroughly study and follow these guidelines. By doing so, you will make an important contribution towards the conservation of the Antarctic ecosystem and minimize visitor impact. It will also help to insure that you will have a safe and fulfilling experience in visiting one of the most exciting and fascinating places on earth.

1. DO NOT DISTURB, HARASS, OR INTERFERE WITH THE WILDLIFE.

- never touch the animals.
- maintain a distance of at least 15 feet (4.5 meters) from penguins, all nesting birds and true seals (crawling seals), and 50 feet (15 meters) from fur seals.
- give animals the right-of-way.
- do not position yourself between a marine animal and its path to the water, nor between a parent and its young.
- always be aware of your surroundings; stay outside the periphery of bird rookeries and seal colonies.
- keep noise to a minimum.
- do not feed the animals, either ashore or from the ship.

Most of the Antarctic species exhibit a lack of fear which allows you to approach relatively close; however, please remember that the austral summer is a time for courting, mating, nesting, rearing young and molting. If any animal changes or stops its activities upon your approach, you are too close! Be especially careful while taking photographs, since it is easy to not notice adverse reactions of animals when concentrating through the lens of a camera. Disturbing nesting birds may cause them to expose their eggs/offspring to predators or cold. Maintain a low profile since animals can be intimidated by people standing over them. The disturbance of some animals, most notably fur seals and nesting skuas, may elicit an aggressive, and even dangerous, response.

2. DO NOT WALK ON OR OTHERWISE DAMAGE THE FRAGILE PLANTS, i.e. LICHENS, MOSSES AND GRASSES.

Poor soil and harsh living conditions mean growth and regeneration of these plants is extremely slow. Most of the lichens, which grow only on rocks, hard-packed sand and gravel, and bones, are extremely fragile. Damage from human activity among the moss beds can last for decades.

3. LEAVE NOTHING BEHIND, AND TAKE ONLY MEMORIES AND PHOTOGRAPHS.

- leave no litter ashore (and remove any litter you may find while ashore); dispose of all litter properly.
- do not take souvenirs, including whale and seal bones, live or dead animals, rocks, fossils, plants, other organic material, or anything which may be of historical or scientific value.

4. DO NOT INTERFERE WITH PROTECTED AREAS OR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH.

- do not enter buildings at the research stations unless invited to do so.
- avoid entering all officially protected areas, and do not disturb any ongoing scientific studies.

Areas of special scientific concern are clearly delineated by markers and/or described in official records (the expedition staff know these sites). Scientific research in Antarctica is in the interest of everyone...visitors, scientists, and laymen.

5. HISTORIC HUTS MAY ONLY BE ENTERED WHEN ACCOMPANIED BY A PROPERLY AUTHORIZED ESCORT.

- nothing may be removed from or disturbed within historic huts.

Historic huts are essentially museums, and they are all officially maintained and monitored by various governments.

6. DO NOT SMOKE DURING SHORE EXCURSIONS.

Fire is a very serious hazard in the dry climate of Antarctica. Great care must be taken to safeguard against this danger, particularly around wildlife areas, historic huts, research buildings, and storage facilities.

7. STAY WITH YOUR GROUP OR WITH ONE OF THE SHIP'S LEADERS WHEN ASHORE.

- follow the directions of the expedition staff.
- never wander off alone or out of sight of others.
- do not hike onto glaciers or large snow fields, as there is a real danger of falling into hidden crevasses.

In addition to the Guidelines of Conduct for Antarctica Visitors adopted by IAATO, all visitors should be aware of the Agreed Measures for the Conservation of Antarctic Fauna and Flora. This annex to the Antarctic Treaty of 1959 addresses the protection of the environment and conservation of wildlife. Citizens of any government that has ratified the Antarctic Treaty are legally bound by the following guidelines of conduct in the region south of Latitude 60° South:

Conservation of Wildlife

Animals and plants native to Antarctica are protected under the following five instruments outlined in the Agreed Measures:

1. **Protection of Native Fauna**
Within the Treaty Area it is prohibited to kill, wound, capture or molest any native mammal or bird, or any attempt at such an act, except in accordance with a permit.
2. **Harmful Interference**
Appropriate efforts will be taken to ensure that harmful interference is minimized in order that normal living conditions of any native mammal or bird are protected. Harmful interference includes any disturbance of bird and seal colonies during the breeding period by persistent attention from persons on foot.
3. **Specially Protected Species**
Special protection is accorded to Fur and Ross Seals.
4. **Specially Protected Areas (SPAs)**
Areas of outstanding scientific interest are preserved in order to protect their unique natural ecological system. Entry to these areas is allowed by permit only.
5. **Introduction of Non-Indigenous Species, Parasites and Diseases**
No species of animal or plant not indigenous to the Antarctic Treaty Area may be brought into the Area, except in accordance with a permit. All reasonable precautions have to be taken to prevent the accidental introduction of parasites and diseases into the Treaty Area.

Additionally, the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 prohibits U.S. citizens from taking or importing marine mammals, or parts of marine mammals, into the U.S. Both accidental or deliberate disturbance of seals or whales may constitute harassment under the Act.

Further, the Antarctic Conservation Act of 1978 (U.S. Public Law 95-541) was adopted by the United States Congress to protect and preserve the ecosystem, flora and fauna of the continent, and to implement the Agreed Measures for the Conservation of Antarctic Fauna and Flora. The Act sets forth regulations which are legally binding for U.S. citizens and residents visiting Antarctica.

Briefly, the Act provides the following:

In Antarctica the Act makes it unlawful, unless authorized by regulation or permit issued under this Act, to take native animals or birds, to collect any special native plant, to introduce species, to enter certain special areas (SPAs), or to discharge or dispose of any pollutants. To "take" means to remove, harass, molest, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, restrain, or tag any native mammal or native bird, or to attempt to engage in such conduct.

Under the Act, violations are subject to civil penalties, including a fine of up to \$10,000 and one year imprisonment for each violation. The complete text of the Antarctic Conservation Act of 1978 can be found in the ship's library.

Our ship's staff will make certain that the Antarctic Conservation Act and the above guidelines are adhered to.

By encouraging your fellow expeditioners to follow your environmentally-conscious efforts you will help us to ensure that Antarctica will remain pristine for the enjoyment of future generations. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.



Guidelines of Conduct for Antarctica Tour Operators

1. Thoroughly read the Antarctic Conservation Act of 1978 (U.S. Public Law 95-541), abide by the regulations set forth in the Act, and brief your staff accordingly. Comparable legislation for non-U.S. countries should be adhered to accordingly. Be mindful of your own actions and present the best example possible to the passengers.
2. Be aware that under the Act, it is prohibited to enter Specially Protected Areas (SPAs) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) unless permits have been obtained in advance. Only those with "compelling scientific purpose" are allowed permits to enter SPAs, as any entry could "jeopardize the natural ecological system existing in such an area." SSSIs are "sites where scientific investigations are being conducted or are planned and there is a demonstrable risk of interference which would jeopardize these investigations." Permits to enter SSSIs are only granted if the "proposed entry is consistent with the management plan" for that particular site.
3. Enforce the IAATO Guidelines of Conduct for Antarctica Visitors in a consistent manner. Please keep in mind, however, that guidelines must be adapted to individual circumstances. For example, fur seals with pups may be more aggressive than without pups, and therefore passengers need to stay farther away; gentoo penguins are more sensitive to human presence than chinstraps; penguins on eggs or with small chicks are more easily disturbed than molting chicks.
4. Hire a professional team, including qualified, well-trained and experienced expedition leaders, cruise directors, officers, and crew. Place an emphasis on lecturers and naturalists who will not only talk about the wildlife, history and geology, but also guide passengers when ashore. It is recommended that at least 75% of the staff have previous Antarctic experience.
5. Hire Zodiac drivers who are familiar with driving Zodiacs in polar regions. Zodiac drivers should take care not to approach too close to icebergs or other floating ice, or glaciers where calving is a possibility, or to steep cliffs where snow or ice may suddenly slip down into the sea. They should also use caution not to disturb wildlife, which can be very sensitive to engine noise.
6. Educate and brief the crew on the IAATO Guidelines of Conduct for Antarctica Visitors, the Agreed Measures for the Conservation of Antarctic Fauna and Flora, the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 and the Antarctic Conservation Act of 1978, and make sure they are consistently enforced. We encourage tour operators to give slide illustrated talks to the crew and offer guided tours ashore, in order to stimulate the crew's interest in Antarctica and to make sure that they also understand the need for the environmental protection of the region. Unsupervised crew should not be ashore.
7. Have a proper staff-to-passenger ratio. Ensure that for every 20 to 25 passengers there is 1 qualified naturalist/lecturer guide to conduct and supervise small groups ashore.
8. Limit the number of passengers ashore to 100 at any one place at any one time.

9. Brief all passengers thoroughly on the IAATO Guidelines of Conduct for Antarctica Visitors, the Agreed Measures for the Conservation of Antarctic Fauna and Flora, the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 and the Antarctic Conservation Act of 1978. It is imperative that passengers and crew be briefed about the Acts and Agreed Measures, as well as the specifics about the landing sites, prior to going ashore. Make certain that passengers understand both the ethical and legal responsibilities outlined in these documents.
10. When approaching whales or seals by ship or by Zodiac, the ship's officer on the bridge, or the Zodiac driver, should use good judgement to avoid distressing them.
11. Communicate your voyage itinerary to the other passenger vessels in order to avoid over-visitation of any site.
12. Give proper notice to all research stations: 72 hours advance notice and a 24-hour advance reconfirmation of the ship's estimated time of arrival at all Antarctic research stations.
13. Respect the number of visits which have been allocated by different stations, for example Palmer and Faraday, as agreed with the NSF and BAS, respectively. Comply with the requests of the station commander — for example, the commander at Arctowski requests that visits only be made in the afternoon.
14. Respect the work the scientists are conducting - do not disturb those working while visiting the stations.
15. It is the responsibility of the tour operator to ensure that no evidence of our visits remains behind. This includes garbage (of any kind), marine pollution, vandalism, etc. Litter must never be left ashore.
16. Follow Annex 5 of the Marpol Agreement. Retain all plastic for proper disposal on the mainland. Wood products, glass and metal must be compacted and disposed of well away from land or returned to the mainland. Ensure that incinerators, if used, are functioning properly.
17. Refrain from dumping bilges or treated sewage within 12 nautical miles of land or ice shelves, or in the vicinity of research stations where scientific research is taking place. This might inadvertently affect the results of scientific investigations, and could potentially harm the wildlife.
18. Respect historic huts, scientific markers and monitoring devices.



BY-LAWS

International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators

ARTICLE I - FOUNDATION, NAME, REGISTRATION, HEADQUARTERS

- Section A. The association was founded in 1991 by seven Antarctica tour operators: Adventure Network International, Mountain Travel*Sobek, Paquet/Ocean Cruise Lines, Salen Lindblad Cruising, Society Expeditions, Travel Dynamics and Zegrahm Expeditions.
- Section B. The name of the association is "International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators". The abbreviated name "IAATO" will henceforth be used in these by-laws.
- Section C. IAATO is registered in Olympia, in the State of Washington, USA.
- Section D. IAATO's headquarters are currently located in Seattle, in the State of Washington, U.S.A. There are no affiliated chapters at present but, being an international association, it is not excluded that foreign chapters may be established in the future.

ARTICLE II - OBJECTIVES

- Section A. To represent the ship and airborne tour operators and charter companies providing Antarctic travel opportunities, to the Antarctic Treaty Organization, member countries and the public at large.
- Section B. To advocate, promote and practice safe and environmentally responsible, private sector travel programs, including tourism, to Antarctica.
- Section C. To develop, and encourage international acceptance of:
- Guidelines of Conduct for Tour Operators
 - Guidelines of Conduct for Visitors
 - Certification/Accreditation for field personnel
 - Education programs linked to the certification program
- Section D. To operate within the parameters of the Antarctic Treaty and the Environmental Protocol with Annexes, MARPOL, SOLAS and similar international agreements, as amended.
- Section E. To foster cooperation between tour operators in the coordination of their itineraries so that overlapping site visits are avoided.

- Section F. To provide a forum for the international, private sector travel industry involved in Antarctica to share expertise and opinions among members themselves and with prospective members.
- Section G. To enhance public awareness and concern for the conservation of the Antarctic environment and ecosystem, and to better inform media, governments, politicians and environmental organizations about private sector travel to that region.
- Section H. To foster cooperation between private sector visitors and the international scientific community active in Antarctica.
- Section I. To support science in Antarctica through cooperation with Antarctic National Programs and to provide logistical support for science.
- Section J. To create ambassadors for the continued protection of Antarctica through offering the opportunity to experience this continent first hand.

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