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IAATO Site Specific Guidelines in the Antarctic Peninsula

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Introduction

At ATCM XXVI, IAATO submitted IP72-*IAATO Site Specific Guidelines 2003 in the Antarctic Peninsula Further Addressing Potential Cumulative Impacts*. This paper included not only site guidelines but additional environmental protective measures IAATO takes when managing Antarctic tourism. The agreed IAATO 2003 Site Specific Guidelines have been adopted by IAATO members since 2003. Two operating seasons (2003-04 and 2004-05) have since passed and these guidelines have proven to be effective. The IAATO Site Guidelines are not used in isolation but used in conjunction with IAATO's established environmental practices and Bylaws, the Oceanites Compendium, appropriate management plans and other documents.

IAATO's Site Guidelines

IAATO encompassed 32 site guidelines for most of the popular visitor sites in the Antarctic (Appendix A). Each site is given an environmental sensitivity rating of Low, Medium or High. The basic reasons for ranking sites focus on species diversity, potential impact to flora and fauna, and the amount of space available for visitors to walk around. Categories of ships allowed to visit each site are listed, along with site-specific environmental sensitivities and recommendations.

Category 1 expedition ships are those that carry less than 200 passengers and Category 2 are ships that carry between 200-500 passengers. Both categories 1 and 2 land passengers ashore. For most sites, the rate of visitation is at present so low that the existing framework in Recommendation XVIII-1 (Guidance for Visitors to the Antarctic and Guidance for those Organising and Conducting Tourism and Non-Governmental Activities), the environmental impact assessment process, IAATO Bylaws and operating procedures are more than sufficient to ensure protection, and compliance with the Environmental Protocol.

Use of the IAATO Guidelines

The guidelines have proven to be a successful management tool for 2003-04 and 2004-05 seasons. One change was recommended in May of 2004, to change Petermann Island from Category 1 to Categories 1&2 based on the effective visitor management and mitigation measures operators take. An additional change was added to Whalers Bay referencing graffiti. Members agreed at IAATO's 16th Annual General Meeting to provide further detail in one or both the IAATO and U.K Site Guidelines and to further enhance the current version. Minor editing changes were inserted as needed.

Environmental Protection and Operational Requirements

IAATO's site specific guidelines need to be used in conjunction with the following operational requirements. IAATO has a number of limitations in place in order to ensure that its members practice safe and environmentally sound tourism. IAATO requires the following:

- 75% of the expedition staff are to have Antarctic or related experience,
- One tour guide must be ashore for every 20 passengers ashore at any landing site,
- No more than one ship is allowed at one landing site at one time,
- Expedition leaders exchange itineraries on a regular basis so as to avoid two ships converging on a site simultaneously,
- No more than 100 passengers exclusive of expedition staff may be ashore at any site at any one time,
- Boots, clothing and equipment are carefully washed to avoid transmission of biological agents from one site to another,
- Adherence to site specific guidelines based on categories of membership,

- Vessels carrying over 500 passengers are not permitted to land tourists under IAATO's Bylaws,
- Vessels carrying 200-500 passengers who intend to make landings are subject to "stringent restrictions on landing activities of time and place." Landings can only be made at category 2 sites or others not part of the 32 sites that have been included,
- Recommendation XVIII-1 (Guidance for Visitors to the Antarctic and Guidance for those Organising and Conducting Tourism and Non-Governmental Activities) must be adhered to,
- Expedition Leaders Checklist and yearly operating advisories must be adhered to,
- An on site analysis prior to landing by the expedition staff,
- Stay at least 15 feet or 5 meters from all seabirds,
- Appropriate briefings of staff and passengers prior to going ashore and once on shore.
- Others as appropriate.

Evaluation of the United Kingdom's proposed Site Specific Guidelines

In addition to implementing the IAATO Site Specific Guidelines, members also trial-tested the United Kingdom (U.K.) Site Guidelines (ATCM XXVI, ATCM XXVII WP 26). A separate paper has been prepared for this meeting noting additional comparisons (ATCM XVIII IP "Site Guideline Analysis"). Both sets of guidelines are useful and both have their strengths and weaknesses. Noted below are concerns based on a 2- year trial test of 10 U.K. sites (Aitcho Islands, Penguin Island, Jougla Point, Cuverville Island, Hannah Point, Petermann Island, Yankee Harbour, Neko Harbour, Pléneau Island and Turret Point).

Brief Analysis

1. Like the IAATO Site Guidelines, the U.K Guidelines are very important, they provide good background information and maps, and they set limitations on ship size.
2. IAATO is not in agreement with the time limits imposed on each of the 4 sites tabled in ATCM WP 26. IAATO considered instituting time limits in the IAATO Site Guidelines but decided against it for environmental and operational reasons. After two years of experience having implemented both guidelines with exception of the time limits, it is still IAATO's opinion not to have time limits.
3. Time limits could pose environmental concerns based on operational issues. Companies would have to "rush" landings. Increased intensity of activities at individual sites for shorter but more intense periods of time could cause visitors (passengers, crew and staff) to behave in a more careless fashion, no matter how restrictive the guides or staff are. There will also be an increase in numbers of tourists ashore in "less hours."
4. The Expedition team on the larger vessels will try and get as many passengers ashore as quick as they can in order to fall into the required time limit. The frequency and intensity of visits to sites with time limitations will be heightened.
5. Each individual activity creates its own time limitations pending the type of landing, where the ship is anchored and the size of the ship.
6. U.K. Guidelines have the potential to create more disturbances by potentially dispersing activity to more sensitive sites, rather than concentrating activity on the sites that are able to cope.
7. The U.K guidelines make no allowance for seasonality – for example maybe some sites based on their topographical features should not be visited until after peak egg laying time, or later in the season when the birds are scattered around the landing site and moulting. If that were the case, specific sites would have to be identified, and Zodiac cruising would be the preferred activity.
8. Time limits are difficult to implement in the field, not only in keeping track of how long individual ships have been ashore at XX or YY but also because there is no way of knowing where government vessels are, whether the scientific community is working ashore, or where yachts are visiting.

9. Stricter limitations may be required in the future, however it makes better visitor management and environmental sense to evaluate each landing site on a site specific basis and make the particular appropriate limitations (e.g. restricting where visitors can go, when they can go, etc.). Regardless, this will be a dynamic process because of the changes to sites caused by weather and ice conditions each year.
10. Categorizing a site as highly sensitive may not be appropriate, depending on the species present and their distribution. For example, a site that includes nesting Southern Giant Petrels indicates a high level of caution, with visitors keeping a safe distance from the birds, but where they are localized, the remainder of the site might not fall into the same category because of different species and their spacing.

Maps and Text

1. The inclusion of maps are a strong addition and advantage in the U.K Site Guidelines The maps and text are useful, although the maps should be updated and ground-truthing performed on each of the sites. Aerial photos are much more effective than drawn maps for ensuring that there would be no misunderstanding in the field. Where the information is available maps, text and aerial pictures would be preferred.
2. Markings on the maps need to be more specific with regard to topographical features.

Recommendations

IAATO formally adopted and implemented Site Guidelines for the last 2 operating seasons. These guidelines are based on best practice developed by industry and experienced scientists for over 30 years. IAATO recommends that the ATCM adopt Site Guidelines but cautions against imposing specific time limits on sites or without considering other important consequences.

IAATO urges Antarctic Treaty Parties to read carefully the ATCM XXVIII IP on Site Guidelines Analysis for a comprehensive presentation and analysis of site usage and an analysis of both sets of guidelines.

The strength of the IAATO site guidelines limits sizes of ships based on categories for 32 sites. They have been adopted and proven to work effectively by IAATO members. Non-Members of IAATO landing over 500 tourists would not be in compliance with IAATO's guidelines.

IAATO recommends merging the documents, and to make them user friendly and effective. Since developing new guidelines takes time, IAATO will continue to use its own site guidelines and reference the 10 U.K. Guidelines for additional information for expedition leaders and staff, until further guidelines are developed.

While it is tempting to assume that just because there is a rise in the numbers of tourists, there is environmental impact from the industry. This is not the case, as there is little discernable impact from the Antarctic tourism industry after 35 years of operation. IAATO activities still remains true to our IAATO Bylaws, Article II Section E: Members of IAATO subscribe to the principle that their planned activities will have no more than a minor or transitory impact on the Antarctic environment. IAATO has the capability of managing tourism effectively and appropriately however we do think that Site Specific Guidelines need to be adopted as soon as possible so that operators who are not members of IAATO can adhere to established best practices.

Table 1 SITE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES Page 1

Site	Latitude/Longitude	Sensitivity	Reason	Category	Recommendations
Whalers Bay	62°59' S, 060° 34' W	Low	Easy movement.	1+2	<p>Remain on the seaward side of the station remains, the old waterboats, and the piles of barrel staves.</p> <p>When walking north of the station remains, do not go beyond the old airplane hangar in order to avoid entry into ASPA 140E.</p> <p>Do not enter buildings or sit on the boats. No graffiti is allowed.</p> <p>Approach oil and fuel tanks with caution, keeping in mind that the foundations are vulnerable to erosion and potential collapse of the tanks.</p> <p>Be aware of flying debris in windy conditions.</p> <p>Hikers visiting Neptunes Window should be careful to avoid areas of loose soil and scree around the lip of the Window to prevent erosion. Proceed along the beach in front of the waterboats, then up the slope towards the Window in single-file, using pre-existing tracks when visible. The return route should be the same. Do not attempt to traverse the scree slope towards the south.</p> <p>Hikers visiting Baily Head should begin up the drainage channels adjacent to Neptunes Window. Follow the drainage uphill but stay left and high during the ascent. Once at the viewpoint of the outside of the caldera, continue northeastwards towards Baily Head, staying on the higher contour lines. When descending to the beach at Baily Head, take care not to disturb penguin-nesting activities.</p>
Cuverville Island	64° 41' S, 062° 38' W	Low early season	Easy movement around breeding groups.	1+2	Beware remains of old whaler's dam
Cuverville Island	64° 41' S, 062° 38' W	Medium late season	Restricted movement among molting birds.		Be extra sensitive when hiking above plateau behind landing beach-Skua nests, moss beds
Jougla Point	64° 50' S, 063° 30' W	Low/Medium	Restricted movement.	1+2	Be extra sensitive to nesting shags-stay 10 meters away
Hannah Point	62° 39' S, 060° 37' W	High	Species diversity. Restricted movement.	1	Keep tourists in controlled, guided groups of 20. Stay off high ground where Southern Giant Petrels nest
Petermann Island	65° 10' S, 064° 10' W	Medium	Caution required in path selection.	1+2	
Half Moon Island	62° 36' S, 059° 55' W	Low / Medium	Caution required in path selection, depending on tern sites.	1+2	

SITE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES Page 2

Site	Latitude/Longitude	Sensitivity	Reason	Category	Recommendations
Pendulum Cove	62° 56' S 060° 36' W	Low	Minimal flora and fauna, unrestricted movement.	1+2	<p>Sensitive to nesting shags-stay 10 meters away.</p> <p>Stay clear of all scientific equipment</p> <p>Follow special instructions given by the expedition staff when entering the water, including staying within the authorized area.</p> <p>Wear proper attire including footwear when entering the water.</p> <p>Be careful not to enter ASPA 140D.</p> <p>Visits to the ruins of the Chilean station Pedro Aguirre Cerda are allowed for groups led by informed staff (or group leaders). Otherwise, visitors should stay below the berm at the beach.</p> <p>Staff (or group leaders) will lead groups on an established walking path to and from the ruins.</p> <p>Take caution to avoid areas of scattered construction materials (broken metals, etc.)</p> <p>Visitors should not go beyond 100 yards behind the station ruins to avoid unstable ground conditions.</p>
Almirante Brown	64° 54' S, 062° 52' W	Low	Minimal flora and fauna, unrestricted movement.	1+2	Be respectful of station
Paulet Island	63° 35' S, 055° 47' W	High	Restricted movement Low tide visits recommended.	1	<p>If visit occurs at high tide, no more than 50 passengers ashore at one time</p> <p>No hiking on loose scree slopes-rockslides danger and nesting Wilson's Petrels present</p>
Neko Harbor	64° 50' S, 062° 33' W	Low/Medium	Low tide permits easy movement.	1+2	Maintain safe distance from the glacier
Aitcho Islands	62° 24' S, 059° 47' W	High	Diverse flora and fauna/ caution required in path selection.	1	Stay off high ground where Southern Giant Petrels nest
Penguin Island	62°06' S, 057° 54' W	High	Diverse flora and fauna/ caution required in path selection.	1	Stay off of high ground where Southern Giant Petrels nest

SITE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES Page 3

Site	Latitude/Longitude	Sensitivity	Reason	Category	Recommendations
Baily Head	62° 58' S, 060° 30' W	Medium	Restricted movement.	1	<p>Stay in the center of the amphitheatre and on the opposite side of the valley starting at the landing site in order to avoid Chinstrap Penguin nesting areas and traverse routes to and from the sea.</p> <p>Due to the threat of avalanches, visitors should maintain a safe distance away from the rock cliffs and the glacier front.</p> <p>Where there are densely nesting penguins, visitors should move slowly and walk around the perimeter of these areas.</p> <p>Hikers visiting Whalers Bay should walk up the amphitheatre, then up the gully to the ridge.</p> <p>Avoid disturbing the penguins and do not walk through the penguin colony. Once on the ridge, stay high and walk along the side of the mountain until you reach the drainage area descending to Whalers Bay</p>
Pleneau Island	65° 06' S, 064° 04' W	Medium	Caution required in path selection around nesting terns.	1	Be sensitive to tern nesting sites
Telefon Bay	62° 56' S, 060° 40' W	Low	Unrestricted movement.	1+2	<p>Beware scientific monitoring equipment</p> <p>Exercise caution in the vicinity of the crater lip, and avoid areas of loose soil and scree to prevent erosion.</p>
Yankee Harbor	62° 32' S, 059° 47' W	Low	Unrestricted movement.	1+2	
Cape Lookout	61° 16' S, 055° 12' W	Medium/ High	Caution required in path selection, low tide essential.	1	
Mikkelsen Harbour	63°54' S, 060° 47' W	Medium	Restricted movement. Low tide visit preferable.	1	
Damoy Point	64° 49' S, 063° 32' W	Low	Unrestricted movement.	1+2	
Point Wild	61° 06' S, 054° 52' W	Medium/High	Very restricted movement.	1	If landing possible, recommend only 1 Zodiac load at a time ashore for brief photo opportunity, 10 minutes each
Turret Point	62° 05' S, 057° 55' W	Medium	Species diversity. Vegetation.	1	

SITE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES Page 4

Site	Latitude/Longitude	Sensitivity	Reason	Category	Recommendations
Robert Point	62° 28' S, 059° 23' W	Medium	Nesting Kelp Gulls.	1	
Devil Island	63° 48' S, 057° 17' W	Medium	Restricted movement at High tide. Nesting Skuas.	1	Low tide visits recommended
Snow Hill Island	64° 28' S, 057° 12' W	Low	No breeding wildlife.	1+2	
Gourdin Island	63° 12' S, 057° 18' W	High	Species diversity. Restricted movement.	1	Very limited visitor space, only 50 tourists ashore at once
Hydrurga Rocks	64° 08' S, 061° 37' W	Medium/High	Species diversity. Restricted movement.	1	Very limited visitor space, only 50 tourists ashore at once
Portal Point	64°30' S, 061° 46' W	Low	No breeding wildlife.	1+2	
Orne Island	64° 40' S, 062° 40' W	Medium	Restricted movement. Nesting Skuas.	1	
Ronge Island	64° 43' S, 062° 41' W	Medium	Restricted movement.	1	
Danco Island	64° 44' S, 062° 37' W	Medium	Restricted movement.	1	
Yalour Islands	65° 14' S, 064° 10' W	Medium	Restricted movement.	1	Very limited visitor space, only 50 tourists ashore at once. Zodiac tours possible for category 2
Prospect Point	66° 01' S, 065° 21' W	Medium	Nesting Kelp Gulls.	1	