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Brief Update on the Antarctic Peninsula Landing Site Visits and Site Guidelines

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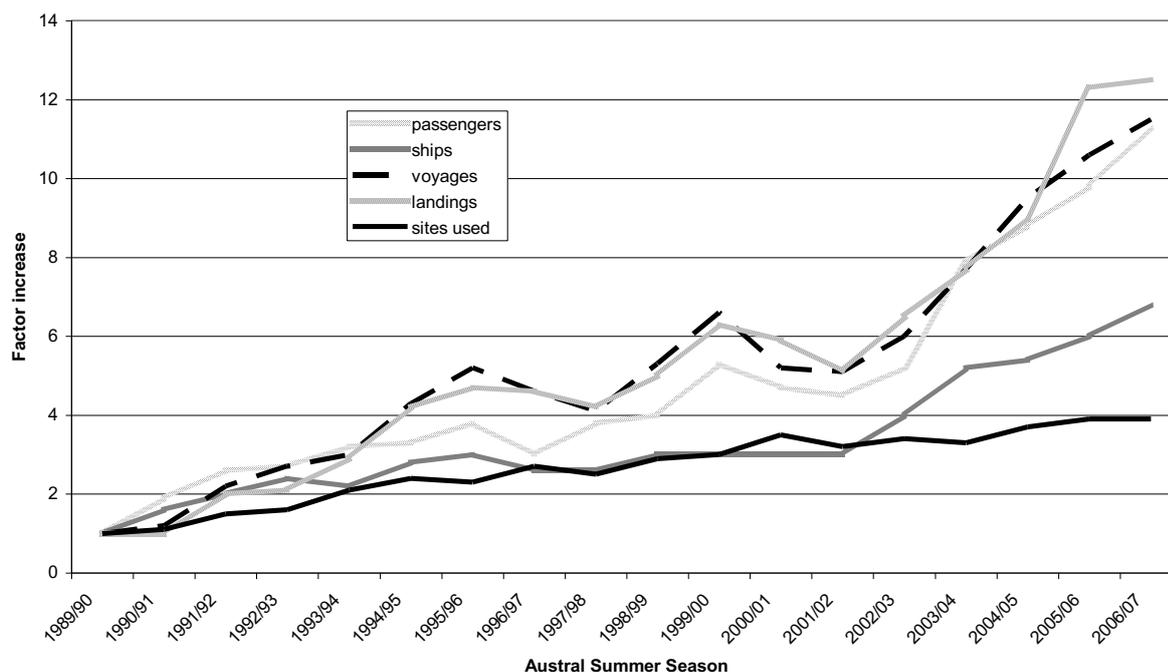
Information Paper submitted by IAATO

Peninsula Landing Site Use

IAATO's Overview of Tourism 2006-2007 (ATCM XXX IP) details Antarctic wide levels of reported visitor activity of IAATO members and some non member activities.

The majority of tourism activities in the Antarctic have been, and currently are, shipborne– with landings – to the Antarctic Peninsula. Preliminary analysis of the Post Visit Report Forms indicate while the number of ships, passengers and voyages have increased by between 10-15% since last season, the number of landings made has seen only a minor increase (2%), and the number of sites used has increased by only 1%. This is understood to be due to more operators opting for making either small boat cruises (e.g. Zodiac, Polar Circle) or ship cruises, versus landings, as a means for their passengers to experience the Antarctic.

Figure 1: Factor Increase in Traditional Shipborne Tourism (with landings) in the Antarctic Peninsula 1989-2007.



During the 2006-07 season, landings continued to concentrate on a very few sites, with 30 sites receiving 80% of the visits, 10 sites receiving 50% and only 5 sites receiving 30% of all visits.

The 20 most visited sites (encompassing 72% of all landings) are shown in Table 1. The landings took place between 13 October 2006 and 28 March 2007, 166 days in total, with the majority taking place between mid

¹ Please note that the information in this paper is based on a preliminary analysis of the 2006-07 season Post Visit Reports of all IAATO Members and two non-Members. When further non-Member reports become available a more complete analysis will be completed, this paper will be revised and posted on www.iaato.org

November and mid March. Two sites received an average of c. 1 visit per day, each visit lasting 1-3 hours on average.

Table 1. Twenty Most visited sites, 2006-07

Site	# Visits	Site	# Visits
Goudier Island (Port Lockroy)	172	Pendulum Cove	67
Whalers Bay	166	Vernadskiy Station	63
Petermann Island	134	Paulet Island	58
Cuverville Island	132	Danco Island	52
Neko Harbor	131	Hannah Point	44
Jougla Point	119	Telefon Bay	44
Half Moon Island	109	Damoy Point / Dorian Bay	40
Almirante Brown	97	Waterboat Point/Gonzalez Videla Station	35
Aitcho - Barrientos Island	86	Baily Head	32
Brown Bluff	74	Yankee Harbor	32

Additional tourism statistics will be posted on the IAATO website (www.iaato.org).

Use of ATCM Endorsed Site Guidelines

An assessment of the use of the 12 sites covered by the ATCM Site Guidelines was conducted through interviews with IAATO Expedition Leaders on 30 of the 34 ships operating this season and through analysis of the Post Visit Report Forms.

Discussions with these Expedition Leaders and some Field Staff indicated that the Site Guidelines had been well received and were being used, with no exception, by all IAATO operators. The majority of the experienced Expedition Leaders indicated that the site guidelines in effect mirrored their traditional pattern of site management and that for example, on occasion the level of specific management used was sometimes more stringent depending on the nature and ability of the groups.

The only consistent query was in reference to the maps where, in some instances, there was potential for misinterpretation. IAATO is currently working with Parties and interested stakeholders towards improving the maps and their interpretation through the use of annotated aerial photography to minimize misinterpretation.

An issue was raised as to the appropriate seasonal time scale of the limitations noted in the Site Guidelines. For example at the end of the season, once the breeding birds have left the site, to what extent are the visitation limits still applicable?

Overall co-ordination between vessels was exceptionally good this past season and deserves special note, as all strived to ensure compliance and successful implementation of the Site Guidelines. Preliminary analysis of the Post Visit Report Forms supports this conclusion, as thus far only on two occasions were the number of visits per day exceeded. In the first instance this was done due to a misunderstanding between Expedition Leaders, the circumstances of the second instance are being investigated.

The total number of known landings made at sites covered by the ATCM Site Guidelines is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Total number of landings at the 12 sites covered by the ATCM Site Guidelines, 2006-07 season

Site	# Landings	# days visit limitations met
Goudier Island	172	15
Petermann Island	134	8
Cuerville Island	132	0
Neko Harbor	131	6
Jougla Point	119	7
Aitcho - Barrientos Island	86	18
Paulet Island	58	12
Hannah Point/Walker Bay	44	3
Yankee Harbor	32	0
Pléneau Island	27	0
Penguin Island	13	0
Turret Point	2	0

Outstanding Issues

Four outstanding issues could be considered to assure successful compliance of the site guidelines.

1. Co-ordination with vessels engaged in visitor and non governmental activities who are not taking part in the central co-ordination provided through the IAATO network.

IAATO recommends that the ATCM might wish to consider:

- Where appropriate, encourage all authorized expeditions engaged in tourist-related and non-governmental visits to Antarctica co-ordinate their itineraries with IAATO;
 - Encourage all such expeditions to submit Post Visit Reports (on the standard excel form) to IAATO for inclusion in the tourism database no later than March 31 of each year. This will enable IAATO to provide the ATCM with the most complete picture of tourist-related and non governmental activities at all sites each season.
2. Ensure that the guidelines are widely available to all visitors to the Antarctic – including one off visitors on private expeditions.

IAATO recommends that the ATCM might wish to consider

- Make copies of the Site Guidelines available at all gateway ports (Ushuaia, Punta Arenas, Puerto Williams, Puerto Madryn, etc), and especially including yacht clubs such as those located at Puerto Williams and Ushuaia.
3. Success of the existing Site Guidelines stems from the fact that they are drafted in a clear, self explanatory format and can be applied in a practical, pragmatic way.

IAATO recommends that the ATCM might wish to consider:

- IAATO and other interested stakeholders be actively involved in the development of any new, and review of existing, Site Guidelines since their application is reliant on self regulation.
4. Consideration should be given to redesigning the color schemes currently used. Since the Site Guidelines are duplicated on copy machines. Color ink is very expensive and there is too much “black” ink used when copying to black and white. The black and white versions are not as easy to read and are less attractive. Using less ink is also more environmentally friendly.

IAATO recommends that the ATCM might wish to consider:

- The color schemes are redesigned to reflect a better end product when reproduced.