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Presented by: IAATO
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Update on the Antarctic Peninsula Landing Site Use and Site Guidelines

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Information Paper submitted by IAATO

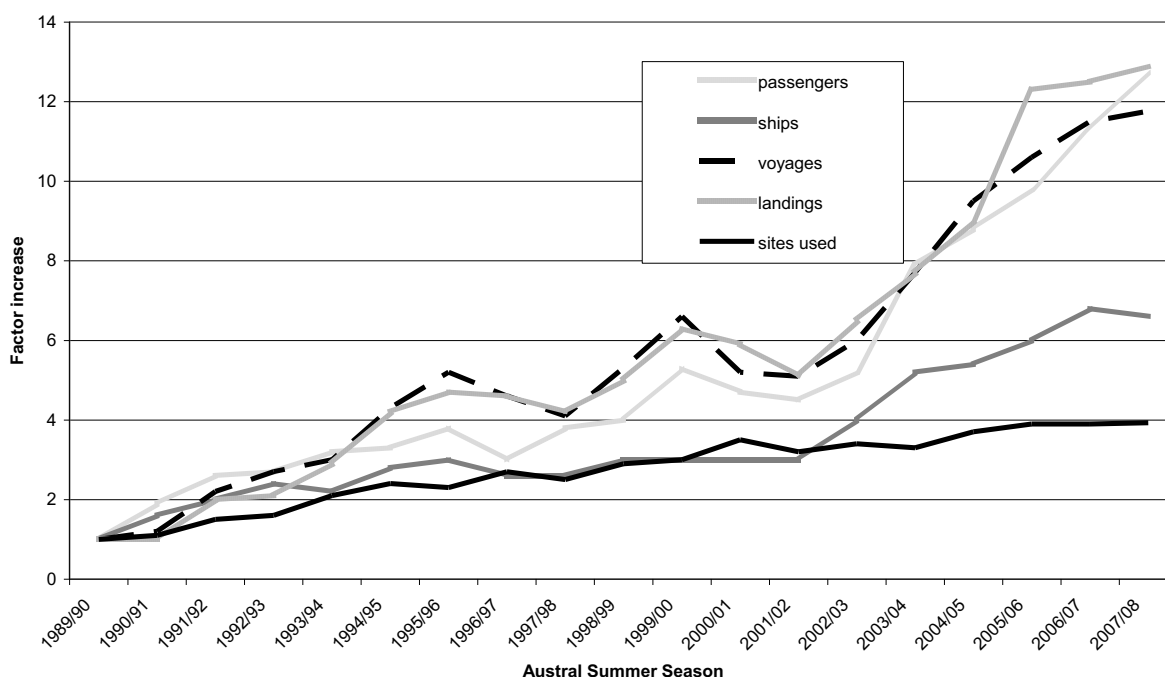
Introduction

IAATO's Overview of Tourism 2007-2008 (ATCM XXXI IP) details Antarctic-wide levels of reported visitor activity of all IAATO members and some non-members. Antarctic tourism continues to be primarily focused on traditional shipborne tourism in the Antarctic Peninsula (over 95% of landed activity). The data in this information paper targets on this sector of activity only and includes information from all IAATO member operators and the two commercial non-IAATO ship operators² who undertake traditional shipborne tourism in this region. This data does not include sailing or motor vessels that carry 12 or fewer passengers.

Antarctic Peninsula Landing Site General Activity

Preliminary analysis of the Post Visit Report Forms indicates a slight change in the pattern of growth of traditional shipborne tourism in this region (see Figure 1). Notably, while the overall number of passengers has continued to increase at a rate similar to the previous three seasons (nearly 13% increase each season), the number of ships (defined as those vessels carrying more than 12 passengers) has decreased by 3% and the number of voyages has increased by only 2%. This is primarily attributable to many of the vessels completing more voyages, including earlier and later in the season, with a consistently high occupancy rate this last year.

Figure 1: Factor Increase in Traditional Landing Shipborne Tourism (not including sailing or motor vessels carrying 12 or fewer passengers) in the Antarctic Peninsula 1989-2008.



¹ The information in this paper is based on a preliminary analysis of the 2007-08 season Post Visit Reports of all commercial ship operators who make landings in the Peninsula area.

² The operators of these two vessels, MV *Discovery* and MV *Marco Polo*, have subsequently joined IAATO for the 2008-09 season.

Further investigation of the activity data also indicates that the increase in number of landings is slightly less than the increase in the number of voyages (2%). This implies that the effort prior 2006/7 season which was subsequently formalized in the IAATO Wilderness Etiquette (see Appendix 1), to encourage operators to take part in more ‘non-landing’ activities such as small boat cruises (e.g. Zodiac, Polar Circle, Naiads) or ship cruises as a means for passengers to experience the Antarctic environment, is slowly taking effect.

The number of sites used has stayed broadly consistent (a less than 1% decrease from 115 sites used in 2006/07 to 114 sites used in 2007/08). Heavy ice conditions in the Erebus and Terror Gulf region of the Weddell Sea caused the geographic distribution of sites visited to focus almost entirely on the west coast of the Peninsula and South Shetlands. A total of eleven sites were visited for the first time during this season, the majority of these (eight) were made by one vessel during two voyages to the area south of the Antarctic Circle on the west coast of the Peninsula.

Specific Landing Site Use

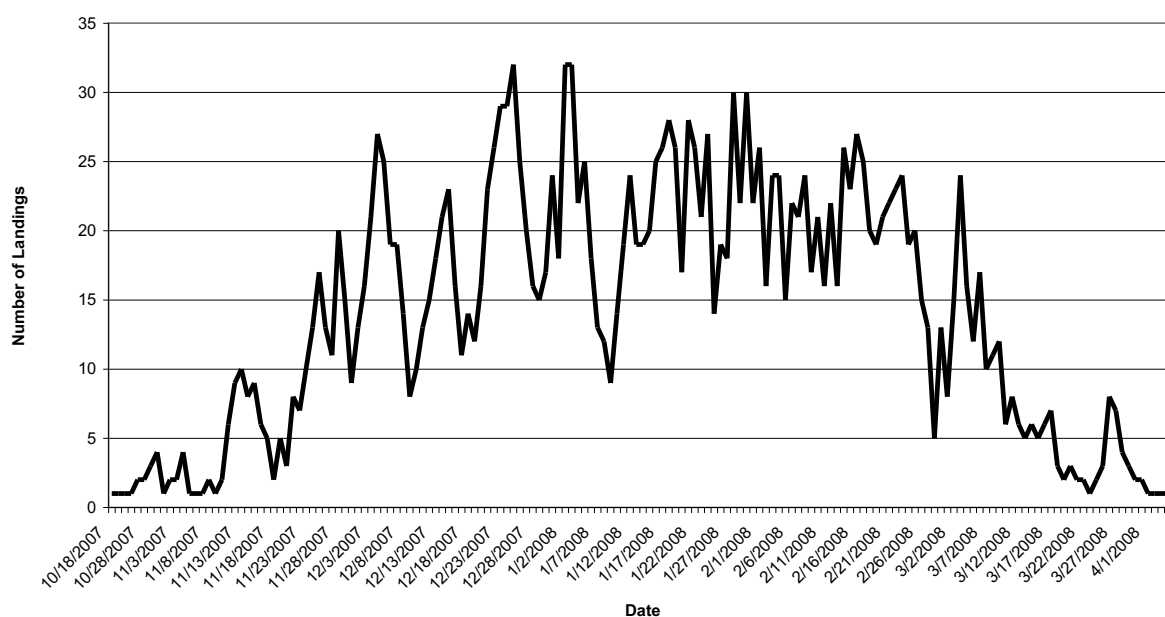
During the 2007-08 season, landings continued to concentrate on a very few sites, with 30 sites receiving 85% of the visits, 10 sites receiving 57% and only 5 sites receiving 34% of all visits. The 20 most visited sites (encompassing 75% of all landings) are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Twenty Most Visited Sites, 2007-08 season

Site	# Visits	Site	# Visits
Goudier Island	173	Brown Bluff	61
Whalers Bay	164	Danco Island	48
Neko Harbor	148	Telefon Bay	47
Cuverville Island	142	Waterboat Point/Gonzalez Videla Station	35
Petermann Island	133	Paulet Island	34
Half Moon Island	120	Damoy Point/Dorian Bay	30
Almirante Brown	109	Pendulum Cove	30
Jougla Point	109	Yankee Harbor	30
Vernadsky Station	88	Arctowski Station	29
Aitcho - Barrientos Island	80	Argentine Islands/Wordie Hut	26

The first tourist landing in the Antarctic Peninsula took place on 16 October 2007 and the last on 6 April 2008, spreading the season over a total of 174 days. The majority of the landings took place between mid-November and mid-March (Figure 2). Each visit lasted an average of 1-3 hours.

Figure 2: Total number of landed visits per day at all sites in the Antarctic Peninsula (not including sailing and motor vessels carrying 12 or fewer passengers).



Assessment of the level of use at individual sites indicates that two sites, Goudier Island and Whalers Bay, received an average of 1 visit per day from the date of the first visit made to the date of the last visit.

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

Use of ATCM Endorsed Site Guidelines

An assessment of the use of the 14 sites covered by the ATCM Site Guidelines was conducted through feedback directly from field staff and analysis of the Post Visit Report Forms.

Co-ordination between field staff was extremely successful this past season and deserves special note. Preliminary analysis of the Post Visit Report Forms supports this conclusion as only twice throughout the season did the number of visits per day exceed the limits set by the guidelines (less than 0.2% of the total number of landings at these sites). The circumstances of these two instances are being investigated with the operators involved.

Field staff continue to raise the concern and issue of seasonal appropriateness on the limitations of the site guidelines, for example towards the end of the season, once the breeding birds have left a site, it would seem unnecessary to maintain visitation limits.

The total number of known landings made at sites covered by the ATCM Site Guidelines, including a listing of the number of occasions the daily visitation limits were met, is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Total number of landings at the 14 sites covered by ATCM Site Guidelines, 2007-08 season

Site	Total Number of Landings in 07/08 season	# days where the daily visit limitations were met
Goudier Island	173	14
Neko Harbor	148	7
Cuerville Island	142	6
Petermann Island	133	6
Jougla Point	109	3
Aitcho - Barrientos Island	80	14
Brown Bluff	61	0
Paulet Island	34	8
Yankee Harbor	30	0
Hannah Point	24	24
Penguin Island	23	2
Pléneau Island	20	0
Turret Point	11	0
Snow Hill - Nordenskjolds Hut	4	0

Wider Policy Issues

Referring back to the wider policy issues raised in ATCM XXIX WP2 and further issues raised in ATCM XXX IP114, IAATO is pleased to note that:

- All known commercial passenger vessels (IAATO members and non-IAATO) which carry more than 12 passengers are included in this data assessment for 2007-08;

- On the basis of the information gathered there appears to be no significant change in the current level and type of visits to any of the sites since the ATCM Site Guidelines were established;
- IAATO is developing an online training and assessment program for field staff to ensure continued good understanding and compliance with the Site Guidelines and other aspects of Antarctic visitor management into the future;
- IAATO's Site Guidelines committee was pleased to initiate and/or participate in the development of a further six Site Guidelines which are being tabled at CEP XI and ATCM XXXI.
- Prior to the 2007-08 season, IAATO's Site Guidelines committee completed a major review of IAATO's Site Guidelines. Although the IAATO Site Guidelines are more abbreviated than the ATCM Site Guidelines they currently cover considerably more visitor sites (a total of 45 following the review). Prior to the review it was decided by IAATO members to keep the IAATO site guidelines active until the suite of ATCM Site Guidelines can be developed for all of the most regularly visited sites and those sites possibly more vulnerable to disturbance. Until this work is completed, the IAATO Site Guidelines can provide a preliminary level of protection for sites including identifying those sites which are perceived, through experience, to be suitable only for vessels carrying less than 200 passengers versus those sites which are able to host visits from vessels carrying between 200 – 500 passengers.
- IAATO welcomes the efforts of Parties permitting or authorizing non IAATO vessels to provide the operator with a set of the site guidelines and/or the website link.

Nonetheless, there remain four issues which should be addressed to ensure the continued success of the ATCM Site Guidelines:

- An efficient systematic review process needs to be developed for the ATCM Site Guidelines already established. To this end, IAATO would recommend that the CEP and ATCM may wish to consider developing a review process in conjunction with IAATO;
- Awareness of the seasonal applicability of Site Guidelines, noting that there may be certain sites where the restrictions are no longer valid once the breeding season is completed;
- Assurance that all tourist activities are included in a single detailed tourism database. On this basis IAATO would recommend that the ATCM may wish to consider encouraging all authorized tourist activities to submit Post Visit Reports Forms (on the standard excel form) to IAATO for inclusion in the IAATO tourism database. This will enable IAATO to continue to provide the ATCM with the most complete picture of tourist-related and non governmental activities at all sites each season, in particular those which have limits applied.
- A mechanism should be considered to coordinate landings of non IAATO operators to ensure the Site Guideline requirements are met where appropriate.

IAATO

May 2008.

Appendix 1:

IAATO Wilderness Etiquette, adopted at IAATO 18th Annual Meeting, Hobart, 2007.

Background:

Following discussions with vessel Masters, Expedition Leaders and field staff during the 2006-07 season, a discussion took place at IAATO's 18th Annual Meeting in 2007 on the importance of safeguarding the intrinsic wilderness values of Antarctica during periods of more intense tourist-related activity.

It was noted that the level of communication and co-operation between IAATO vessels has been excellent and worthy of special commendation. Despite this however, comments had also been made to the effect that on certain days, in specific geographic areas, relatively heavy traffic in small areas had the ability to detract from visitors' wilderness experience.

Furthermore concern had been expressed that the time slots created through the ship scheduler was resulting in what amounted to a 'time-slot'-dictated approach to itinerary planning in the field, potentially resulting in a loss of wilderness value through vessels queuing for their allocated time slot at landing sites.

It was acknowledged that each company has a different concept of what denotes a wilderness experience and that those co-ordinating activities between vessels face an increasingly complex task; however it was felt that small, but potentially significant, steps could be taken to improve the situation.

In an effort to ensure that the wilderness value is maintained, and with the intention of ensuring consistency amongst all operators, it was agreed to establish an IAATO "Wilderness Etiquette" to achieve the following objectives:

- Reinforce the understanding that the wilderness aspect is intrinsic to visitor's experience of Antarctica;
- Reduce the pressure on vessels to view the number of landings made per day or per trip as the key indicator of the success of a voyage;
- Underpin the informal understanding and courtesy code traditionally afforded between IAATO operators.

To this end, the following four step wilderness etiquette was developed for implementation amongst operators:

IAATO Wilderness Etiquette:

- a) Where possible, Expedition Leaders and Vessel Masters recognise the desirability to keep vessels out of sight from each other as far as is practicable.
- b) Vessels work co-operatively to ensure that they give a 'buffer' time (of a recommended 30 – 60 minutes) between visits at landing sites.
- c) Where appropriate, spread activities across all possible 'experience' platforms (e.g. ship cruising, small boat cruising, kayaking, landings etc.) to decrease pressure on specific landing sites.
- d) Over time, companies phase out of brochures and other marketing materials direct mention of specific sites (e.g. Deception Island, Paradise Bay) to reduce the pressure for all vessels to visit these sites on all departures.