



Agenda Item: ATCM 11

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Land-Based Tourism and the Development of Land-Based Tourism Infrastructure in Antarctica: An IAATO Perspective

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Information Paper submitted by IAATO

In light of discussions at ATCM XXX (New Delhi, India 2007) it was felt that it may be helpful to further the debate on land-based tourism issues, particularly in reference to permanent structures, and to resubmit this paper that was first tabled at ATCM XXIX IP-85 *Land-Based Tourism and the Development of Land-based Tourism Infrastructure in Antarctica: An IAATO Perspective* (2006) with up-to-date data and some relevant modifications.

New Zealand proposed a resolution at ATCM-XXX in Delhi (WP-13 *Environmental Impact of Tourism and Other Non-Governmental Activities in the Antarctic Treaty Area*) endorsing the concept that all tourism activity is guided by the principle that tourism should have no more than a minor or transitory impact on Antarctica. IAATO supports this view and welcomed the adoption of Resolution 5 (2007) *Tourism in the Antarctic Treaty Area**Recommend that the Parties discourage any tourism activities which may substantially contribute to the long-term degradation of the Antarctic environment and its dependent and associated ecosystems.*

This Information Paper presents a view of land-based tourism and the development of land-based facilities from IAATO's perspective. IAATO's view of land-based tourism is underpinned by two key facts:

- 1) 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 Bylaws Article II, Section E.) This powerful statement has guided IAATO since inception and was included in the Bylaws in 2004 to make clear IAATO's position on this matter.
- 2) IAATO supports land-based tourism provided it is conducted in a professional, competent and best-practice fashion and conforms to requirements under the Environmental Protocol.

IAATO does, however, acknowledge the concerns of Treaty Parties towards permanent or semi-permanent infrastructure for land-based tourism and offers the following points as a contribution to the discussion.

Definition of Land-Based Tourism

What constitutes 'land-based tourism' and 'permanent or semi permanent infrastructure'? Clarification of these terms would be useful.

For example, are all the following classed as land-based tourism?

- Groups based on a ship or yacht that overnight on short or extended stays for climbing expeditions or other activities;
- Flight operators that take visitors to field camps or stations for a day visit or to overnight;
- Flight operators that support overland expeditions, mountaineers and ski traverses for extended visits of up to 70 days.

Currently, IAATO members, non-IAATO operators and government supported expeditions all undertake this range of activities.

What does 'permanent and semi permanent infrastructure' include?

- Marking of paths for conservation or safety reasons;
- Jetties and wharves;
- Aircraft runways;
- Tented camps;

- Construction of hotels;
- Stations offering visitor accommodation for overnight or extended stays;
- Souvenir shops at research stations;
- Museums and Churches.

Until these terms are more clearly defined it is difficult to resolve some of the issues over land-based tourism and permanent or semi-permanent facilities.

Land-Based Facilities and IAATO's Position

Currently, IAATO members use a number of facilities for supporting landings and other tourism activities. Jetties and wharves at stations are used for landing passengers. The prepared runway at King George Island is used by IAATO and non-IAATO members for one- and two-day tourist visits and fly-cruise trips or for medical evacuation. There are proposals to improve flight instrumentation at the airstrip. There has also been an expansion in recent years in overnight accommodation offered for tourist use at National Operators' stations. All these facilities have been developed for National Program use. They have been offered in one way or another to tour operators but, as yet, no facilities have been developed primarily for tourist use. In addition, tented camps have been erected purely for short- and long-term visitor use, though national programs have occasionally made use of these camps.

What would IAATO members' response be to proposals to construct facilities specifically or primarily for tourism use? Indications from IAATO members show that their response will vary depending on the facility, cost and location. Improved landing facilities at some locations may be perceived as useful and an 'all weather runway' at a suitable location may have commercial benefits.

Members are clear, however, that none is currently interested in promoting or funding the construction of major facilities such as "hotel" accommodation; not only would this conflict with IAATO Bylaws that ensure all activities have a less than minor or transitory impact but there is the potential to contradict the very 'wilderness and aesthetic values' that are a key element in visitors' desire to see Antarctica.

Any construction activity undertaken by a commercial company organized in a Treaty State would most likely need to undertake an environmental assessment, probably at the level of a CEE. There would be ample opportunity for States to comment on the structure during review by the CEP. The relevant State would also likely apply permit or authorization procedures according to its national laws.

Trends in Land-Based Tourism

The following table shows trends in land-based tourism by commercial company and Antarctic season.

Status	IAATO	Non-IAATO Operator		
	Member			
Year	ANI/ALE	DAP	ALCI/The Antarctic Company	White Desert
2008-09 <i>estimated</i>	260			
2007-08	260	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
2006-07	204	704	Unknown	
2005-06	212	862	Unknown	
2004-05	221	657	Unknown	
2003-04	119	398	Unknown	
2002-03	180	Unknown	Unknown	
2001-02	159	Unknown		
2000-01	127	Unknown		
1999-00	139	Unknown		
1997-98	131	Unknown		
1996-97	91	Unknown		

Detailed information on the above mentioned companies can be found in IAATO's Overview of Tourism submitted each year to the ATCMs.

IAATO and Land-Based Tourism – a Suggested Way Forward

- 1) Agree the definitions and terms to be used for
 - a. land-based tourism
 - b. permanent and semi-permanent infrastructure;
- 2) Define the use of station facilities with respect to land-based tourism and develop clear visitor management strategies;
- 3) Encourage non-IAATO operators to provide data on their land-based activities;
- 4) Endorse the concept that all tourism activity is guided by the principle that tourism should have no more than a minor or transitory impact on Antarctica. This may be sufficient to prevent construction of permanent land-based facilities solely for tourist use at previously undeveloped sites (cf. Resolution 5 *Tourism in the Antarctic Treaty Area* (2007)).