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# Report of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators 2013-14



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## *Under Article III (2) of the Antarctic Treaty*

### **Introduction**

The International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) is pleased to report its activities to ATCM XXXVII, under Article III (2) of the Antarctic Treaty.

IAATO continues to focus activities in support of its mission statement to advocate, promote and practice safe and environmentally responsible private sector travel to Antarctica by ensuring:

- Effective day-to-day management of Member activities in Antarctica;
- Educational outreach, including scientific collaboration; and
- Development and promotion of Antarctic tourism best practices.

A detailed description of IAATO, its mission statement, primary activities and recent developments can be found in the *2014-15 Fact Sheet*, and on the IAATO website: [www.iaato.org](http://www.iaato.org).

### **IAATO Membership and Member Activity**

IAATO comprises 118 Members, Associates and Affiliates. Member offices are located worldwide, representing 61% of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Party countries, and carrying nationals from nearly all Treaty Parties annually to Antarctica.

Due to the timing of ATCM XXXVII, it has not been possible to compile or analyse the statistical data from the Post Visit Reports for the just-concluded 2013-2014 season. However, preliminary numbers indicate that the general picture is similar to that forecast in ATCM XXXVI IP103 *IAATO Overview of Antarctic Tourism 2012-13 Antarctic Season and Preliminary Estimates for 2013-14 Season*.

It is expected that the detailed 2013-14 season information, including details on landing site use, will be available in June 2014. It will be posted on the IAATO website ([www.iaato.org](http://www.iaato.org)) under Guidelines and Resources, Tourism Statistics.

Details on anticipated tourism statistics for 2014-15 season can be found in ATCM XXXVII IP45 *IAATO Overview of Antarctic Tourism: Preliminary Estimates for 2014-15*. These numbers reflect only those travelling with IAATO member companies. The Membership Directory and additional statistics on IAATO member activities can be found at [www.iaato.org](http://www.iaato.org).

### **Recent Work and Activities**

A number of initiatives were undertaken during the year, including:

- Strengthening of the Association's corporate governance and institutional robustness. This includes a review of anti-trust and liability policies, creation of a new Operations and Communications Assistant role within the Secretariat and relocating the office from Providence to Newport, Rhode Island.
- In February 2014, two IAATO operators conducted a Search and Rescue Communications exercise in partnership with MRCC Ushuaia and IAATO. Details of the exercise can be found in ATCM XXXVII IP79 *SAR Communication Exercise: Argentina - IAATO* (Argentina and IAATO)

- The Dockside Observer program for IAATO yachts, a new component in the association's enhanced observer scheme, was trialled successfully. This is the first time that actual observations of IAATO yacht operations has taken place.
- The Field Staff Online Assessment and Certification Program continues to evolve, incorporating feedback from a survey of field staff. A total of 383 staff have now passed at least one of the assessments, with more than 243 successful participants this past season. This reflects an increased participation of 17% and 13% respectively. Additionally, the IAATO Field Staff Newsletter, with news and updates from around the Continent, continues to build a forum for field staff to consider mutual issues, challenges and opportunities, including sharing best practice and discussions on situational leadership and risk assessments.
- A full review of the wildlife guidelines and boot-washing and decontamination guidelines was undertaken, including seeking expert independent advice on management techniques.
- The IAATO information sheet, *Understanding Climate Change in Antarctica*, which is available to all members for distribution to their clients, was updated to take into account the latest information from SCAR's ACCE report. Additionally, a list of actions that IAATO members may undertake to minimise their carbon footprint was circulated to all operators.
- Improving hydrographic information on a trial and opportunistic basis by a number of IAATO vessel operators has continued. The initiatives included:
  - Crowd Sourcing project in conjunction with Hydrographic Offices and private service providers; and
  - A collaborative effort between an IAATO Member and the French Hydrographic Office (SHOM), which surveyed, processed and subsequently produced seven charts of previously poorly surveyed channels and anchorages in the Peninsula.
- IAATO's Marine, Accreditation and Executive Committees all met during the year to progress work on initiatives such as the enhanced observer scheme and incident review processes.
- Collaborations with IAATO's northern counterpart, Association Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO), on issues of mutual concern, including field staff training, safety and environmental issues.

### ***IAATO Meeting and Participation at Other Meetings during 2013-14***

IAATO Secretariat staff and member representatives participated in internal and external meetings, liaising with National Antarctic Programs, governmental, scientific, environmental and industry organisations.

- Representation at COMNAP XXV in Seoul, Korea (July 2013). IAATO places great merit in good cooperation and collaboration between its Membership and National Antarctic Programs.
- IAATO welcomed the opportunity to take part in Chile's CIMAR Ice Navigator Training course in Valparaiso, Chile October 2013.
- An IAATO representative attended the 13<sup>th</sup> International Hydrographic Organization / Hydrographic Commission on Antarctica (IHO/HCA) Meeting in Cadiz, Spain (December 2013). IAATO remains a strong supporter of the on-going work of the HCA, and will continue to work with HOs and HCA in the development of a crowd-sourcing hydrographic data collection scheme.
- As an advisor to Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), IAATO continues to be active in the development of the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) mandatory Polar Code, participating in various IMO MSC and MEPC committee and sub-committee meetings and working groups.
- Looking forward, the IAATO 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting will take place May 27-29, 2014, in Providence, Rhode Island, USA. In addition to the above-mentioned initiatives, the meeting will also consider:

- Development of an incident, accident and near miss database, potentially in conjunction with AECO.;
- Guidelines for the use of remotely operated drones or quadcopters for aerial photography; and
- A dedicated session on tourism growth management.

Immediately following the IAATO 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting, there will be a half-day Adventure tourism workshop, considering both deep field and additional or new activities that are taking place from traditional ship- or yacht-based platforms. The workshop will include a panel discussion, comprising a mix of operators and Treaty Party representatives, and breakout groups to consider specific case studies from the perspective of risk management and environmental considerations.

As in previous years, Treaty Party representatives are invited to join any of the open sessions during the IAATO Meeting and subsequent workshop. Additional information can be found at <http://iaato.org/iaato-25th-annual-meeting>.

### ***Environmental Monitoring***

IAATO continues to provide ATCM and CEP with detailed information on member activities in Antarctica. As noted above, statistical data for the 2013-14 season will be available in June 2014 and accessible via the IAATO website.

IAATO continues to work collaboratively with scientific institutions particularly on environmental monitoring and educational outreach. This includes working with Antarctic Site Inventory, the Lynch Lab at Stony Brook University and the Zoological Society of London/Oxford University. Additionally, IAATO operators note sightings of fishing vessels for subsequent reporting to CCAMLR in support of the work against IUU fishing.

IAATO welcomes opportunities for collaboration with other organisations.

### ***Tourism Incidents 2013-14***

IAATO continues to follow a policy of disclosing incidents to ensure risks are understood and appropriate lessons are learned for all Antarctic operators. To date, incidents involving IAATO Operators that have been reported during the 2013-14 season included:

- In November a series of three medevacs via Maxwell Bay involved additional support from National Antarctic Programs, two through Bellingshausen Base (RAE) and one through Great Wall Station (CHINARE). IAATO and the Member operators involved are grateful for the assistance provided. Following these events, a reminder was sent to all field staff regarding the importance of self-sufficiency. Subsequent medevacs were conducted without any assistance from National Antarctic Programs.
- During a South Pole traverse ski expedition, practices outlined in a Waste Management Permit were not followed. The IAATO operator supporting the expedition has had discussions with the US-NSF and the expedition participants and a clean up of waste was made by a subsequent expedition. The incident will be discussed at IAATO 25 with the intention of developing tighter practices.
- On February 20<sup>th</sup>, MV *Orion* had a technical issue with its engine cooling system. The vessel used auxiliary systems until the issue was rectified some hours later. There was no threat to life or the environment.

### ***Scientific and Conservation Support***

During the 2013-14 season, IAATO Members cost-effectively or on *pro bono* basis transported over 125 scientific, support and conservation staff, and their equipment and supplies between stations, field sites and gateway ports. This included:

- Transfers of scientists between stations;
- Non-urgent medical evacuations;
- Collection of scientific samples and other data collection for research programs (all permitted);
- Transport of scientific equipment to/from stations.

Initial reports indicate that IAATO operators and their passengers also contributed more than US\$400,000 to scientific and conservation organisations active in Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic (e.g. Save the Albatross, Antarctic Heritage Trust, Last Ocean, Mawson's Huts Foundation, Oceanites and World Wildlife Fund).

Over the past nine years, these donations have totalled approximately US\$3.5 million in cash donations.

### ***With Thanks***

IAATO appreciates the opportunity to work cooperatively with Antarctic Treaty Parties, COMNAP, SCAR, CCAMLR, IHO/HCA, ASOC and others toward the long-term protection of Antarctica.