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# Report of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators 2014-15



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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 XXXVIII, 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 *2015-16 Fact Sheet*, and on the IAATO website: [www.iaato.org](http://www.iaato.org).

### ***IAATO Membership and Visitor Levels during 2014-15***

IAATO comprises 124 Members, Associates and Affiliates, representing businesses from 66% of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Party countries. IAATO member operators carry nationals from nearly all Treaty Parties annually to Antarctica. Since 2010, IAATO has represented all passenger vessels operating in Antarctic waters under the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS).

During the 2015-16 Antarctic tourism season, the total number of visitors travelling with IAATO member companies was 36,702, a slight decrease of 2% compared to the previous season. Tourism continued to be well below the 2007-08 season, when IAATO operators transported 46,265 visitors to the continent.

Details on tourism statistics including activities and nationalities can be found in ATCM XXXVIII IP53 *IAATO Overview of Antarctic Tourism: 2014-15 Season and Preliminary Estimates for 2015-16*. 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:

- Strengthening of the Association's corporate governance and institutional robustness. This includes finalising anti-trust and liability policies and the increase from part to full-time for the Environmental and Operations Manager position within the Secretariat.
- In February 2015, two IAATO operators conducted a live Search and Rescue Communications Exercise in partnership with IAATO and the Maritime New Zealand's Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ). Details of the exercise can be found in ATCM XXXVIII IP52 *Joint Search and Rescue Exercise in the Antarctic*.
- The Dockside Observer program for IAATO yachts is now an established component of the association's Enhanced Observer Scheme, which involves making field observations of member

operations to promote best practice. IAATO continues its Yacht Outreach Campaign, aimed at commercial and private yacht operators intending to visit Antarctica. Details can be found at [www.iaato.org/yachts](http://www.iaato.org/yachts).

- The IAATO online Field Staff Assessment and Certification Programme continues to evolve, testing staff's working knowledge of the IAATO Field Operations Manual, which is updated annually and incorporates all relevant outcomes from the ATCM and CEP. Certification is a mandatory part of the hiring process for many IAATO operators. The assessments are tailored by Antarctic location. Since 2010, 560 field staff have passed at least one of the assessments.
- In September 2015, IAATO, in conjunction with its sister organization in the Arctic, the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO), will hold its inaugural Field Staff Conference.
- Educating members, their field staff and clients about Antarctic science and conservation issues is an important component of IAATO's work. Key documents including guidelines, standard operating procedures and briefings have been translated into multiple languages (English, French, Russian, Spanish, Dutch, German, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Portuguese) to assist in communicating key messages.
- IAATO receives many enquiries on an annual basis from individuals, yachts and private groups who are at various stages of planning expeditions to Antarctica. IAATO explains the Antarctic Treaty System and permitting process to all of these and passes any relevant information onto a Competent Authority that may be involved.
- Improving hydrographic information on a trial and opportunistic basis by a number of IAATO vessel operators continues. Initiatives include Crowd Sourcing trials in conjunction with Hydrographic Offices and AECO. In 2014, a breakthrough was made that enables IAATO and AECO operators to share accumulated historic depth sounding data from the Polar Regions.
- In preparation for the expected entry into force of the Polar Code on 1 January 2017, IAATO is holding a Vessel Operators Meeting, '*Towards Polar Code Ready*', in June, 2015.

### ***IAATO Meeting and Participation at Other Meetings during 2014-15***

IAATO's 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting took place from April 28-May 1st, 2015 in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. This report was written in advance of IAATO 26 to meet the Information Paper deadline but, in addition to the above-mentioned initiatives, the meeting includes:

- Discussions on IAATO's draft guidelines on Kayaking and Underwater Activities (See IP86 *New IAATO Activity Guidelines*);
- Reviewing IAATO's draft Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) policies following feedback from the previous season (see IP 88 *IAATO Policies on Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV)*);
- Next steps to be taken in the 2015/2016 season by the IAATO Enhanced Observer Scheme;
- Establishment of a new Air/Cruise working group;
- A half-day facilitated workshop to 'train the trainer' on Emergency Exercise Planning.

Treaty Party representatives are invited to join any of the open sessions during IAATO's Annual Meeting and any subsequent workshops.

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

- **Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP) 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting**, Christchurch, New Zealand, August 2014. IAATO places great merit in good cooperation and collaboration between its Membership and National Antarctic Programs.

- **SCAR Open Science Conference**, Auckland, New Zealand, August 2014.
- **International Polar Tourism Research Network**, Christchurch, New Zealand, August 2014.
- **Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators Conference & Annual Meeting**, October 2014, Oslo, Norway.
- **International Hydrographic Bureau Conference**, Monaco, October 2014.
- **International Ice Charting Working Group Meeting**, Punta Arenas, Chile, October 2014.
- **Assessing Vulnerability of Flora and Fauna in Polar Areas Symposium**, Norwegian Polar Institute, Tromsø, November, 2014.
- IAATO continues to be active in the development of the **International Maritime Organization's** (IMO) mandatory Polar Code as an advisor to Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), participating in various IMO meetings.

### ***Environmental Monitoring***

IAATO continues to provide ATCM and CEP with detailed information on member activities in Antarctica and works collaboratively with scientific institutions particularly on long term environmental monitoring and educational outreach. This includes the 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 2014-15***

IAATO continues to follow a policy of disclosing incidents to ensure risks are understood and appropriate lessons are learned for all Antarctic operators. Incidents involving IAATO Operators that have been reported during the 2014-15 season include:

- On November 21 2014, a compass went missing from the Port Lockroy museum, managed by the UKAHT. Two cruise ships that had visited that day were contacted immediately. Despite swift action by all parties involved, the compass was not recovered. IAATO sent reminders to Peninsula operators and field staff of the importance of reminding visitors that the museum and its contents are protected under the Antarctic Treaty System as a Historic Site and Monument.
- In January 2015, an individual making a solo attempt to the pole was advised that his slow progress would result in him missing key Search and Rescue (SAR) deadlines and that he was at risk of being without SAR cover due to the logistical difficulties of extending it. The individual acknowledged the advice but continued anyway (his Competent Authority was advised). His pre-arranged SAR cover involved a hand-over between two IAATO deep field operators as he approached the Pole, a system that has worked well in the past. In this case, the initial lack of cooperation by the individual resulted in a notional lack cover for a period of a few days, breaking the conditions of his permit. The IAATO operators involved resolved the issue between them and the individual was flown out of 84S. The 'gap' in cover raises questions for deep field operators and competent authorities.
- During the 2014-2015 season, there were several incidents involving non-IAATO yachts. These included a grounding in the South Shetlands that resulted in an IAATO operator repatriating seven Polish nationals. Any such incidents are reported back to the associated Treaty Party or Competent Authority if there is one.
- At time of writing (22 April), nine medevacs had been reported.

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

During the 2014-15 season, IAATO Members cost-effectively or freely transported over 50 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;
- Field support of research projects
- 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\$531,000 to scientific and conservation organisations active in Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic during 2014-2015.

Over the past decade, these donations have totalled over US \$4 million.

***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.