



May 2020

IAATO's Response to COVID-19

Members of The International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators continue to prepare for future safe and environmentally responsible travel during the global challenges posed by COVID-19.

As with industries the world over, the pandemic has presented IAATO and its members with a series of exceptional challenges. With the 2020/21 Antarctic expedition season due to start in October, decision-making is particularly challenging as pandemic response around the world evolves. We continue to keep lines of communication open with Antarctic Gateway countries and other polar stakeholders as governments work on a way forward.

The impact of the pandemic on IAATO Member operations in the coming season remains unclear. But, as a community, our members are working through a number of possible scenarios, all the time seeking advice from experts unravelling the long-term implications of, and solutions to, Covid-19.

IAATO's administration is taking an agile approach to pre-season planning, discussing a series of potential protocols to strengthen safe and responsible operations South.

As well as compliance with the latest best-practice advice regarding post-pandemic protocols, at the heart of all discussions about future operations are the safety of all seaborne and deep-field visitors, field staff and crew, and the protection of Antarctic wildlife and the environment.

Although the current situation is unprecedented, IAATO has proven success in responding quickly to change and developing and implementing best practice procedures. We will continue to monitor the evolving situation, communicate with experts and our polar stakeholders, and adapt as required.

Our mission, as always, is to deliver safe operations that have no more than a minor or transitory impact on the Antarctic environment and we remain committed to that mission as we adjust to the 'new normal' created by these exceptional circumstances.

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IAATO is a member organization founded in 1991 to advocate and promote the practice of safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic.

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Notes for Editors:

- Stock images are available.
- In addition to its own bylaws and requirements for membership, IAATO requires its members to abide by the Antarctic Treaty System and other international regulations.

About IAATO

IAATO is a member organization founded in 1991 to advocate and promote the practice of safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic.

IAATO Members work together to develop, adopt and implement operational standards that mitigate potential environmental impacts. These standards have proved to be successful including, but not limited to;

- Antarctic site-specific guidelines and site selection criteria;
- passenger to staff ratios and limiting numbers of passengers ashore;
- boot washing guidelines and the prevention of the transmission of non-native organisms;
- wilderness etiquette;
- ship scheduling and vessel communication procedures;
- emergency medical evacuation procedures and emergency contingency plans;
- reporting procedures;
- marine wildlife watching guidelines;
- station visitation policies.

IAATO has been carefully monitoring, analyzing and reporting Antarctic tourism trends since 1991 as part of its commitment to the effective self-management of guest activities. Every year at IAATO's annual meeting, members have open and candid discussions on safety, environmental protection and self-regulation. Decision-making is supported by recommendations developed by IAATO's many dedicated committees and working groups throughout the year. The meetings conclude annually with the voting in of new policies on best practice which support the association's mission.