



June 2020

IAATO's Response to COVID-19

In response to COVID-19, the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators has created a COVID-19 steering group to strengthen its management of safe, environmentally responsible Antarctic travel.

An IAATO COVID-19 Steering group has been created to drive the creation of IAATO guidance on COVID-19 procedures for the 2020/21 season.

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

The Steering Group, currently consisting of IAATO member Operators and members of the IAATO Secretariat, has created an actionable framework that will lead to IAATO COVID-19 guidance for Members, leveraging the strength, skills and experience of IAATO's existing committees and working groups, as well as the expertise of the secretariat, stakeholders, and worldwide industry standards.

IAATO has been in close discussions with stakeholders, and the local and national governments since the crisis started.

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 and post-pandemic practices around the world evolve.

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 values, including wildlife and the environment.

There is a great deal of work ahead as IAATO develops guidance on operations in the context of COVID-19. IAATO has a proven record of success in responding quickly to change and developing and implementing best practice.



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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.