



August 2020

IAATO's Response to COVID-19

As part of our duty to promote and advocate safe and environmentally responsible travel to Antarctica, IAATO's COVID-19 Steering Group has developed a framework for our members to support them in forming their operational responses in the wake of COVID-19 ahead of the 2020/21 Antarctic season.

IAATO continues to facilitate conversations between members with an ongoing series of virtual COVID-19 Town Hall meetings, sharing materials available to the industry from flag states and insurance providers, the World Health Organization and CDC among others, and promoting discussion around challenges as they emerge.

At the latest COVID-19 Town Hall, held on August 17, members shared lessons learned, perspectives regarding challenges ahead and the status of the various Antarctic gateways. Each Antarctic gateway country is responding to domestic considerations and our COVID-19 Steering Group remains in close communication with the relevant national agencies.

Our members have unique operations. They are therefore responsible for developing their own operational and contingency plans that adjust their processes according to their specific requirements and the needs of their guests pre-departure, on expedition, and after disembarkation. IAATO's framework guides considerations for operations and acts as a prompt for members to support their assessment of worst-case scenario response, emergency evacuations, and hospital needs.

As our members continue to determine what their season will look like, IAATO will consistently support them as we do every season, and they, in turn, will follow all pre-season preparations and protocols to be in the strongest position possible to deliver safe and environmentally responsible expeditions for their guests commensurate with IAATO's usual robust standards.

Ends –

Issued by the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators

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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 and include, but are 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.