



September 2020

IAATO's Response to COVID-19

IAATO continues to have an open dialogue with Antarctic Gateway Governments to assess possibilities for operations for the upcoming season, sharing information with our members.

The situation in these communities and globally is ever-changing. Borders throughout the world are opening and closing based on each nation's changing need. We are continuing to work closely with Antarctic Gateways.

Each of our members have unique operations, and the decision to go to Antarctica this season is one each company must make for itself. When reaching a decision, each organisation will assess the limitations on international travel to Antarctic Gateways, potential amendments to their protocols, and the impact on their own operations, team members, guests travelling to embarkation points, and gateway communities.

A number of IAATO Operators have taken the difficult decision to either cancel or curtail their 2020/21 Antarctic expeditions, sharing this with their guests in recent weeks. IAATO is continuing to support those who are yet to determine their next steps for the season ahead as well as sharing COVID-19 developments with Operators as a whole.

Operators are responsible for customising their own operational and contingency plans according to environmental guidelines, their operational requirements, and the needs of their guests. IAATO's COVID-19 Steering Group's framework, released in July, assists members in their risk assessment and considerations for operations during the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

IAATO is a partnership of organisations with commitment to Antarctica. Our priority remains to support our members' decision-making to safeguard all seaborne and deep-field visitors, field staff, crew, Antarctic wildlife and the environment.

The COVID-19 Steering Group remains in communication with Antarctic Gateway countries and other polar stakeholders as governments work on a way forward, and will continue to share materials available to the industry from flag states and insurance providers, the World Health Organization among others, with IAATO Operators and Associates, as well as maintain discussions around emerging challenges.

Ends –

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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 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.