

# Sailing to Antarctica?

## Be prepared and help protect the Antarctic environment

[www.iaato.org/yachts](http://www.iaato.org/yachts)

### Know your legal requirements

Visiting Antarctica is one of life's greatest experiences. It is a place that can be seductive in its beauty, wildness, pristine nature and isolation, but harsh, inhospitable and fiercely dangerous in its extreme climate. Each year, hundreds of visitors go to Antarctica on board sailing or motor yachts to experience this unique ecosystem. With this rewarding adventure comes a responsibility: careful planning and preparation are needed to legally travel to and stay safe in Antarctica. Remember to tread softly. Protecting the fragile environment for science and future visitors is a commitment everyone must make. Please join the Antarctic community and help keep the tradition alive.



### Be a safe and responsible Antarctic visitor

All Antarctic-bound yacht expeditions must be authorized by the skipper's own country or flag state.

Although Antarctica does not 'belong' to anyone as such, it is managed by the Antarctic Treaty so all visitors must comply with certain rules during their stay. Requirements can differ depending on the Treaty Party government authority, so please contact your own government office to determine what documents are required. A list of these, with contact details, can be found on the Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty Website (<https://ats.aq/devAS/Ats/ContactPoints?lang=e>). If you would like assistance in contacting an appropriate governmental authority that is not on this list, please contact [iaato@iaato.org](mailto:iaato@iaato.org).

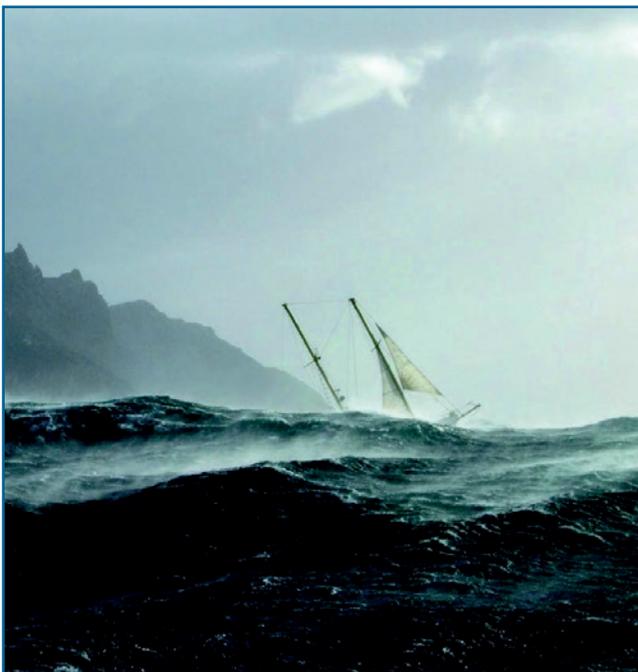


## Be Prepared:

- All Antarctic-bound yacht expeditions must be authorized by the skipper's, or owner's, own country or the vessel's flag state. All intended activities, such as flying Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), kayaking, mountaineering, camping, etc. must also be authorized. The authorization process is a good way to prepare for Antarctica. Heavy fines can result from non-authorized visits.

If departing from Chile or Argentina an exit permit, or zarpe, by itself is not a suitable authorization to visit Antarctica. It must be supplemented with an appropriate permit. Contact [iaato@iaato.org](mailto:iaato@iaato.org) if you require assistance with contacting a relevant government office.

- **Be prepared for extreme weather conditions.** You, and your vessel, must be prepared for extreme weather conditions including knockdown, storm-force winds, cold, drifting ice and bad anchorages. Extreme weather and strong winds can hit hard and fast, with little warning. Make sure you are capable of sustaining full-speed groundings, loss of engine, propeller, steering, rigging/mast, anchor, etc. without outside assistance.
- **Be completely self-sufficient.** Do not expect rescue, outside assistance, fuel, or other supplies. Carry sufficient tools and knowledge to make your own repairs. Scientific research stations and ships are "outposts" with limited resources, too. They must only be contacted for assistance in life-threatening emergencies.
- **Stay Safe.** Weather and ice can change in just a few minutes in Antarctica. Keep an anchor watch while on board. Take shelter and emergency supplies when going ashore in case you cannot return to your yacht. Do not take anything from bases or emergency huts except in a life-threatening emergency. Many ice fields and glaciers are crevassed and dangerous to cross without the correct skills and equipment. Icebergs and ice cliffs can collapse with no warning, swamping vessels. Keep a respectful distance.



## Protect the Environment:

- **Leave no trace of your visit** – plan ahead for your waste. Antarctica is one of the most pristine environments in the world; please help keep it that way. Waste litter is unsightly and can damage the environment and entangle or poison animals. Food waste – especially poultry – can introduce disease. Carry storage containers to remove all waste from Antarctica. Use sealable barrels and dry bags to bring out your biodegradable wastes (allow roughly eight litres per person per week) plus cans, bottles, household rubbish, used oil, coolant and dirty bilge water. For sewage, use your holding tank, especially when in harbour. If you don't have one, keep your toilet paper on board. Nothing – not even toilet paper – rots in the cold water.

**Remember the adage Bring it in – Take it out.** Nothing must go over the side, and bilge, or other pumps, should not be left on auto. Once north of 60°S (the Treaty Area boundary) biodegradables may be disposed of at sea.

- **Avoid introducing non-native species.** Non-native species can eradicate unique endemic species of plants, animals and invertebrates. Make sure your clothing and shore gear are either new or cleaned thoroughly before you go. Vacuum pockets, turn-ups, backpacks and camera bags to remove soil and seeds and use a disinfectant wash (like Virkon® S) to disinfect items like footwear, camera tripods or



hiking poles. You may not bring pets, or other animals, to the Antarctic to prevent the risk of introducing diseases to Antarctica's native population.

For more information on how, and why not to "pack a pest", please see: <http://iaato.org/dont-pack-a-pest>.

- **Protected Areas.** Some areas in Antarctica have been given special status for scientific or ecological reasons. Antarctic Specially Protected Areas (ASPAs) are areas where visitors are not allowed to enter. Antarctic Specially Managed Areas (ASMAs) may be entered, but special codes of conduct are required. Please check before visiting. There are also sites that have Visitor Guidelines; these are sites of particular interest to visitors, and the guidelines are useful indications of what to see at these sites while causing minimal disruption. It is important to know the locations of these sites, ASPAs, ASMAs and abide by any specific guidelines.

Information on ASPAs and ASMAs can be found at [www.ats.aq/e/ep\\_protected.htm](http://www.ats.aq/e/ep_protected.htm) and information on Visitor Guidelines can be found at [https://www.ats.aq/devAS/ats\\_other\\_siteguidelines.aspx](https://www.ats.aq/devAS/ats_other_siteguidelines.aspx).



Figure 1

- **Protect the wildlife.** Antarctica's wildlife is unique and unafraid of humans. As such, it can be particularly susceptible to disturbance. It is important not to feed, touch or harm any wildlife. Keeping at least 5m (15 feet) away is recommended to allow visitors good viewing experiences with minimal disturbance (Figure 1). Animals should be given the right of way, and it is important to walk, or to manoeuvre vessels, slowly in the vicinity of wildlife to avoid alarming birds or mammals. If cruising in the vicinity of whales or seals, do not drift down on them, as this can disrupt feeding or resting. Birds and mammals are particularly vulnerable when breeding or moulting, so please be especially careful around them. Guns, explosives, hunting and fishing are all prohibited, as is the removal of any bones, eggs, feathers or fossils.

For more information on how to make the most of wildlife viewing opportunities while minimizing disturbance see: <https://iaato.org/visitor-guidelines>

- **Protect the vegetation.** Despite its inhospitable environment, Antarctica hosts unique vegetation that must struggle to survive. These plants, including mosses and lichens, are fragile and can be easily damaged if walked on. Please stay off the vegetation, and don't pick any plants.
- **Protect the physical environment.** The untouched beauty of Antarctica can appear overwhelmingly powerful and immutable, but small changes from a series of visitors could have an impact. Please help by not removing any rocks, stones or fossils. Rubbish burning and open fires are prohibited as they scar the landscape and can damage historic buildings and artefacts. Do not drill into rocks for yachting or mountaineering purposes.



## Respect Antarctic Science & Heritage

- **Respect Antarctic Heritage.** Antarctica's history is a fascinating tale of courage and exploration in an extreme environment, a legacy left in structures and artefacts. Please leave them untouched for future visitors to enjoy. Be careful not to damage, leave graffiti, remove or interfere with any historic sites or monuments. Anything that pre-dates 1957-58 is considered an historic artefact. A list of Antarctica's dedicated historic sites and monuments can be found at: [http://www.ats.aq/e/ep\\_protected.htm](http://www.ats.aq/e/ep_protected.htm).
- **Respect Antarctic Science.** Research stations are busy places, often operating on limited resources. Always ask before visiting a station and follow station guidelines. In the field, you might come across markers or equipment that support scientific research. Please leave them undisturbed.
- **Respect other visitors.** To the extent possible, coordinate landings and manage activities to ensure a quality experience for all visitors in the vicinity. In Antarctica, everyone is a guest, and courtesy is the best policy.

## Want to learn more?

Additional resources and the latest information can be found at:

- A one-stop-shop of general information on the authorization process, guidelines, resources, links to relevant sites: [www.iaato.org/yachts](http://www.iaato.org/yachts)
- Antarctic Treaty Information for visitors: [www.ats.aq/e/ats\\_other\\_tourism.htm](http://www.ats.aq/e/ats_other_tourism.htm)
- Antarctic Treaty information on protected areas: [www.ats.aq/e/ep\\_protected.htm](http://www.ats.aq/e/ep_protected.htm)
- 'Southern Ocean Cruising' by Sally and Jérôme Poncet, <http://www.era.gs/resources/soc/index.shtml>
- A PowerPoint slideshow of guidance for visitors to Antarctica, covering many of these points, is available at: <http://iaato.org/visitors-slide-show>.

Among IAATO yacht operators, there are specialized yachts available for charter as a whole or with individual berths and other companies which provide consultancy services specializing in assisting private yacht visits to Antarctica. For more information see [www.iaato.org/yachts](http://www.iaato.org/yachts).

## Yachting Guidelines and Checklist

A checklist and guidelines, to assist in voyage preparation for those planning a yacht visit to Antarctica, have been adopted by Antarctic Treaty Parties (Resolution 10, 2012). These documents can be downloaded at: [www.iaato.org/yachts](http://www.iaato.org/yachts).