



Guidelines for Visitors to the Antarctic

All visits to Antarctica should be conducted in accordance with the Antarctic Treaty, its Protocol on Environmental Protection, and relevant Measures and Resolutions adopted at Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings (ATCM). Visits may only occur after prior approval by the relevant national authority.

These Guidelines provide general advice for visiting any location, with the aim of ensuring visits do not have adverse impacts on the Antarctic environment, or on its scientific and aesthetic values. ATCM Site Guidelines for Visitors provide additional site-specific advice for some locations.

Read these Guidelines before you visit Antarctica and plan how to minimise your impact.

If you are part of a guided visitor group, pay attention to your guides, and follow their instructions.

If you have organised your own visit, you are responsible for abiding by these guidelines. You are also responsible for identifying the features of the sites you visit that may be vulnerable to visitor impacts, and for complying with any site specific requirements, including Site Guidelines, Antarctic Specially Protected Area (ASPA) and Antarctic Specially Managed Area (ASMA) management plans, or station visit guidelines. Guidelines for particular activities or risks (such as aircraft use, or avoiding the introduction of non-native species) may also apply. Management plans, a list of historic sites and monuments, and other relevant information can be found at www.ats.aq/e/ep_protected.htm. Site Guidelines can be found at www.ats.aq/e/ats_other_siteguidelines.htm.

PROTECT ANTARCTIC WILDLIFE

WILDLIFE

The taking of, or harmful interference with, Antarctic wildlife is prohibited except in accordance with a permit.

- When in the vicinity of wildlife, walk slowly and carefully, keep noise to a minimum, and maintain an appropriate separation distance. Consider the topography of the site, as this may have an impact on the vulnerability of wildlife to disturbance.
- Observe wildlife behaviour. If wildlife changes its behaviour stop moving, or slowly increase your distance.
- Animals are particularly sensitive to disturbance when they are breeding (including nesting) or moulting. Stay outside the margins of a colony and observe from a distance.
- Always give animals the right of way and do not block their access routes to the sea.
- Do not feed wildlife or leave food or scraps lying around.

VEGETATION

- Vegetation, including mosses and lichens, is fragile and very slow growing. Do not damage the vegetation by walking, driving or landing on any moss beds or lichen covered rocks.
- When travelling on foot, stay on established tracks whenever possible to minimize disturbance or damage to the soil and vegetated surfaces. Where a track does not exist, take the most direct route and avoid vegetation, fragile terrain, scree slopes, and wildlife.

INTRODUCTION OF NON-NATIVE SPECIES

- Do not introduce any plants or animals into the Antarctic.
- In order to prevent the introduction of non-native species and disease, carefully wash boots and clean all equipment including clothes, bags, tripods, tents and walking sticks before bringing them to Antarctica. Pay particular attention to boot treads, velcro fastenings and pockets which could contain soil or seeds. Vehicles and aircraft should also be cleaned.
- The transfer of species and disease between locations in Antarctica is also a concern. Ensure all clothing and equipment is cleaned before moving between sites.



RESPECT PROTECTED AREAS

Activities in Antarctic Specially Protected Areas (ASPAs) or Antarctic Specially Managed Areas (ASMAs) must comply with the provisions of the relevant Management Plan.

Many historic sites and monuments (HSMs) have been formally designated and protected.

SPECIALLY MANAGED AND SPECIALLY PROTECTED AREAS

- A permit from your national authority is required for entry into any ASPA. Carry the permit and obey any permit conditions at all times while visiting an ASPA.
- Check the locations and boundaries of ASPAs and ASMAs in advance. Refer to the provisions of the Management Plan and abide by any restrictions regarding the conduct of activities in or near these areas.

HISTORIC SITES AND MONUMENTS AND OTHER STRUCTURES

- Historic huts and structures can in some cases be used for tourist, recreational and educational visits. Visitors should not use them for other purposes except in emergency circumstances.
- Do not interfere with, deface or vandalise any historic site, monument, or artefact, or other building or emergency refuge (whether occupied or unoccupied).
- If you come across an item that may be of historic value that authorities may not be aware of, do not disturb it. Notify your expedition leader or national authorities.
- Before entering any historic structure, clean your boots of snow and grit and remove snow and water from clothes, as these can cause damage to structures or artefacts.
- Take care not to tread on any artefacts which may be obscured by snow when moving around historic sites.

RESPECT SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Do not interfere with scientific research, facilities or equipment.

OPERATORS

- Obtain permission before visiting Antarctic stations.
- Reconfirm scheduled visits no less than 24-72 hours before arriving.
- All visitors must comply with any site specific rules when visiting Antarctic stations.

VISITORS

- Do not interfere with, or remove, scientific equipment or markers, and do not disturb experimental study sites, field camps or stored supplies.

KEEP ANTARCTICA PRISTINE

Antarctica remains relatively pristine. It is the largest wilderness area on earth. Please leave no trace of your visit.

WASTE

- Do not deposit any litter or garbage on land nor discard it into the sea.
- At stations or camps smoke only at designated areas, to avoid litter and risk of fire to structures. Collect ash and litter for disposal outside Antarctica.
- Ensure that wastes are managed in accordance with Annexes III and IV of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty.
- Ensure that all equipment and rubbish is secured at all times in such a way as to prevent dispersal into the environment through high winds or wildlife foraging.

WILDERNESS VALUES

- Do not disturb or pollute lakes, streams, rivers or other water bodies (e.g. by walking, washing yourself or your equipment, throwing stones, etc.)
- Do not paint or engrave names or graffiti on any man-made or natural surface in Antarctica.
- Do not take souvenirs, whether man-made, biological or geological items, including feathers, bones, eggs, vegetation, soil, rocks, meteorites or fossils.
- Place tents and equipment on snow or at previously used campsites where possible.



BE SAFE

Be prepared for severe and changeable weather. Ensure that your equipment and clothing meet Antarctic standards. Remember that the Antarctic environment is inhospitable, unpredictable and potentially dangerous.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS/ PREPARATIONS

- Know your capabilities, the dangers posed by the Antarctic environment, and act accordingly. Plan activities with safety in mind at all times.
- Keep a safe distance from dangerous wildlife like fur seals, both on land and at sea. Keep at least 15m away, where practicable.
- If you are travelling in a group, act on the advice and instructions of your leaders. Do not stray from your group.
- Do not walk onto glaciers or large snow fields without proper equipment and experience. There is a real danger of falling into hidden crevasses.
- Do not expect a rescue service. Self-sufficiency is increased and risks reduced by sound planning, quality equipment, and trained personnel.
- Do not enter emergency refuges (except in emergencies). If you use equipment or food from a refuge, inform the nearest research station or national authority once the emergency is over.
- Respect any smoking restrictions. Use of combustion style lanterns and naked flames in or around historic structures is strictly forbidden. Take great care to safeguard against the danger of fire. This is a real hazard in the dry environment of Antarctica.

LANDING AND TRANSPORT REQUIREMENTS

Act in Antarctica in such a way so as to minimize potential impacts on the environment, wildlife and associated ecosystems, or the conduct of scientific research.

TRANSPORT

- Do not use aircraft, vessels, small boats, hovercraft or other means of transport in ways that disturb wildlife, either at sea or on land.
- Avoid overflying concentrations of birds and seals. Follow the advice in Resolution 2 (2004) *Guidelines for the operation of aircraft near concentrations of birds in Antarctica*, available from www.ats.aq/devAS/info_measures_list.aspx?lang=e.
- Refilling of fuel tanks for small boats should take place in a way that ensures any spills can be contained, for example onboard a vessel.
- Small boats must be free of any soil, plants, animals or animal products and must be checked for the presence of any soil, plants, animals or animal products prior to the commencement of any ship-to-shore operations.
- Small boats must at all times regulate their course and speed so as to minimise disturbance to wildlife and to avoid any collisions with wildlife.

SHIPS

- Only one ship may visit a site at any one time.
- Vessels with more than 500 passengers shall not make landings in Antarctica.

LANDING OF PASSENGERS FROM VESSELS

- A maximum of 100 passengers may be ashore from a vessel at any one time, unless site specific advice requires fewer passengers.
- During landings from vessels, maintain a 1:20 guide to passenger ratio at all sites, unless site specific advice requires more guides.

IAATO Vessel Code of Conduct

Article 1: Guiding Principles

IAATO seeks to ensure that the following objectives and guiding principles are promoted by its Members:

1. Adhere to all applicable international and national legal and policy requirements, including those of the Antarctic Treaty System.
2. Support the mission of IAATO: advocate and promote the practice of safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic.
3. Treat all Visitors to the Antarctic (IAATO or other) with dignity and respect, while exercising the highest level of professional and ethical behavior, and working cooperatively to resolve differences.
4. IAATO Members will work cooperatively to share experiences and lessons learned.
5. Provide a safe workplace while protecting the fragile Antarctic environment.
6. The creation of Antarctic Ambassadors is recognized as being particularly important to enriching and enhancing the standing of Antarctic visitation.

Article 2:

Part 1: General Practices

1. The IAATO Code of Conduct does not supersede existing maritime safety practices.
2. All MARPOL, SOLAS and STCW (as amended), and all safety related Antarctic Treaty System Decisions, Measures, Resolutions, and other rules and regulations must be followed.
 - a. Where possible, non-SOLAS/MARPOL IAATO Vessels should also follow and practice MARPOL, SOLAS, and STCW.
3. All STCW, as amended and all training-related Antarctic Treaty System Decisions, Measures, Resolutions, and other rules and regulations must be followed.
4. All MARPOL and Antarctic Treaty System Decisions, Measures, Resolutions, and other rules, regulations and, and IAATO Waste Management Statements must be followed
5. All stakeholders should safeguard the natural environment with a view to achieving sound, continuous and sustainable economic growth geared to satisfying equitably the needs and aspirations of present and future generations.

6. Where possible, Expedition Leaders and Vessel Masters recognise the desirability to keep vessels out of sight from each other as far as is practicable. This has become increasingly more difficult as the number of vessels increase, so courteousness and spatial awareness are critical.
7. Where possible, Expedition Leaders and Vessel Masters recognise the desirability to keep noise from their vessel and activities from impacting others, even when a vessel is transiting. This may require extra thought and spatial awareness.

Part 2: Specific Practices

1. Watch officers should be aware of other vessels nearby and possible conflicts between vessel activities.
2. When transiting a narrow channel (e.g Peltier or Errera Channels) where another vessel is present, "Securite, Securite, Securite" messages must be broadcast over Channel 16.
3. If a vessel is involved in activities in a narrow channel, upon hearing the "Securite" call, the vessel engaged in the activities should immediately respond over Channel 16 and notify the incoming vessel of any potential hazards/risks to navigation.
4. Be conscious of the ship wake when other vessels are around and offering activities. When sailing past a vessel engaged in activities, be sure to communicate your vessel's intentions, and inquire what activities are in progress.
 - a. Avoid disturbances such as waking, buzzing, bumping, or crowding other vessels.
 - b. This is particularly important when Zodiacs/small boats and kayakers are on the water, as not only could a ship wake make kayaking less enjoyable, it could potentially cause an emergency.
 - c. It is particularly important to be aware of Submersible activities. Ship and/or small boat operations should avoid transiting near submersibles when they are deployed.
5. Coordinate with vessels in the area who may be watching wildlife, or when watching wildlife yourself.
 - a. Call the bridge of the nearby vessel and describe the encounter, including how long you may stay in the area.
 - i. Agree to a plan – will the other vessel join? Or how will the vessels avoid each other?
 - ii. Should vessels work cooperatively to watch wildlife together, it is important IAATO Wildlife Watching Guidelines are followed.

6. Vessels should work co-operatively to ensure that they give a 'buffer' time of a recommended 30 – 60 minutes between visits at landing sites.
 - a. If another vessel arrives early to a site, whether anchoring or not, make sure the bridge officer and/or EL communicate, and arrange a plan.
7. Where appropriate, spread activities across all possible 'experience' platforms (e.g. ship cruising, small boat cruising, kayaking, landings etc.) to decrease pressure on specific landing sites.
8. Visitor activities should be designed and programmed in such a way as to protect the wilderness and natural heritage composed of ecosystems and biodiversity and to preserve protected wildlife.
9. IAATO activities must be conducted with respect for archaeological and cultural heritage.
10. Helicopter Operations should be run in accordance with the ATCM Aircraft Wildlife Awareness Manual and IAATO Helicopter Etiquette.
11. Both Ships and Yachts should assure they have a working AIS and Channel 16 at all times. Remember to enter transit information into the AIS each time.
12. Respect radio communications: many ships use same available UHF/VHF channels. If possible, come to an agreement between vessels, changing channels for the conflicted time to avoid miscommunication.
13. IAATO Members are not the only visitors to the Antarctic. Whilst IAATO Members book through the IAATO ship scheduler to avoid conflicts, there are those outside of IAATO who do not have access to the ship scheduler. While IAATO vessels make every effort to use the ship scheduler efficiently there could be extenuating circumstances which cause other vessels to be at an anchorage.
14. All IAATO SOLAS vessels or yachts with lengths greater than 50m and/or over 300GT should utilize the ship scheduler platform for coordination of activities.

Article 3: Communication

1. **Communication is key:** There should always be a mutual respect, good communication and consideration between all working in the Antarctic environment. Good communication by expedition staff, officers, crew, both internally and between different vessels is essential for safety and environmental considerations.
2. Vessels should communicate about ice and weather conditions such as crevasses, unexpected currents and/or winds, and high mortality events. This sharing of information will increase safety.
3. When in doubt call on the radio.
4. Should you come across a visitor who is not following Antarctic Treaty System or IAATO guidelines, speak to them and explain the concerns. If the issue cannot be resolved, please follow the appropriate procedures for reporting the interaction.

Article 4: Conduct specific to ships and yachts

1. In accordance with worldwide practice, if a yacht is already at an anchorage that conflicts with the ship anchorage, the yacht is in no way obliged to move to accommodate the ship.
2. When anchoring, sailing yachts often run lines ashore. When navigating small boats near an anchored yacht, care should be taken to avoid anchor lines.
3. Communication between a larger vessel and a yacht is best achieved through a friendly dialogue between the EL or navigator on the bridge on the ship and the skipper of the yacht, beginning on Channel 16 VHF.
4. Remember if a yacht has to move to accommodate a ship, this is done voluntarily.
 - a. Ship officers should also be aware that if an arrangement has been made with a yacht for it to move to give way to the ship, this might take some time as when yachts anchor they normally do a complete system shut down, unlike a ship, and so may need more time to prepare to move.

Reducing Waste – Guidelines for Visitors to Antarctica

Be part of the solution

When travelling to Antarctica, there are steps you can take to reduce the amount of plastic and other waste produced. Waste is removed from Antarctica by ship or air and taken to ports outside the region for disposal, but these may have limited facilities depending on their location.

Your operator is working towards reducing single-use plastic in its operations. You could support their efforts and help leave no lasting signs of your visit by reducing the number of disposable items you bring, use and dispose of during your trip. There are also steps you can take to stop litter and harmful plastics from ending up in the environment.



Before traveling

- Travel with reusable items such as water bottle, coffee cup, reusable bag, reusable cutlery, etc. that you can bring home with you.
- Consider bringing a reusable waterproof bag to protect your camera from the elements.
- When packing toiletries, choose eco-friendly alternatives such as cosmetics free of microbeads.
- Choose products with non-plastic packaging such as soap and shampoo bars. Your accommodation may also be equipped with refillable dispensers. If you need to use plastic bottles and containers, use reusable ones.
- Synthetic clothing sheds small plastic fibers. We recognize that it may not be possible to entirely stop using synthetic clothing but reducing the amount we use is a great first goal.

When traveling

- When possible, avoid using disposable cups, straws, bottles, food containers and other items.
 - Do not throw any non-organic items in the toilet, including wet wipes.
 - Make sure all your belongings are well secured when outside. A moment of inattention and a gust of wind can easily blow light bags and other items away.
 - Enquire about local environmental initiatives and how you can reduce your plastic footprint to support the community you visit.
 - Talk to other travelers and staff – not everyone has the same experience and knowledge, so it is a good opportunity to learn from and inspire others.
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Continue at home

- **Reduce:** By consuming less and using reusable items you can help reduce the total amount of waste.
- **Reuse:** Extend the life of your belongings. If you no longer need it, give it away.
- **Recycle:** Learn about the cycle of your waste at home and sort out your waste accordingly to maximize the chances of material recovery.

Special note

Products labelled as 'degradable' or 'biodegradable' will degrade faster than regular plastic items but may still contain fossil fuels, thus creating microplastic particles. To effectively reduce waste, avoid using these alternative options and choose reusable items instead.

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Please help keep these out of nature	
	Cigarette butts because the filters contain plastic.
	Chewing gum because most gum is synthetic.
	Eye contact lenses because they are made of plastic.
	Paper cups because they are lined with plastic to remain waterproof.
	Tea bags because most are sealed with plastic glue.
	Wet wipes because they contain plastic fibers.

What the travel industry is doing

The International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) and the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO) have joined the United Nations Clean Seas campaign. Together with their members, they are working to systematically reduce the use of disposable plastics and other items. Operators are also involving guests in beach cleanups worldwide and remove tons of marine litter every year. Through information to crew, staff and guests, and through sharing of best practices IAATO and AECO are involved in raising awareness and involvement in safeguarding of the environment, at sea and on land.

Are you an Antarctic Ambassador?

Join the conversation:

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#Antarctic_Ambassadors
 #LoveAntarctica

