

Antarctica and the IAATO information: The International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) was founded in 1991. The IAATO has a number of rules, one of the most important is that there can be no more than 100 passengers ashore at anyone one time, as its' regulations control the frequency, duration and number of guests visiting any Antarctic site.

Because no more than 100 guests can land at one site at the same time, the IAATO regulations of larger ships (over 120 passengers) will spend less time ashore or visit fewer sites (than smaller ships with fewer than 120 guests) – largely as a result of taking longer to allow all clients to go ashore. If more than 100 guests wish to go ashore at the same site the reality is that some guests will be waiting on-board. That said some operators run a dual operation: Zodiac cruising or kayaking for some clients whilst other clients go ashore; then they swap for the next day – zodiac cruisers go ashore and vice versa.

Visits from ship or yacht based tourism ashore are generally of a duration lasting approximately 1-3 hours and of moderate intensity with a maximum of 100 passengers excluding expedition staff. Depending on the site visited and time of year, there can be between 1-3 landings per day using inflatable crafts or, rarely, helicopters to transfer visitors. Field Staff supervise all shore visits with a ratio of one member of staff for every 10-20 tourists. Staff usually has past Antarctic experience (IAATO requires 75% of the field team to have previous Antarctic experience) and occupations can range from: ornithologists, marine biologists, general biologists, geologists, glaciologists, historians, and naturalists.

All tourists are obliged to comply with the Antarctic Treaty, Environmental Protocol and adhere to the Guidance For Visitors to the Antarctic (Recommendation XVII – 1) which in part states:

1. Protect Antarctic wildlife

Do not disturb wildlife either at sea or on land

Do not feed or touch animals or photograph in a way that will disturb

Do not damage plants

Keep noise to the minimum

Do not bring non-native species to Antarctica

2. Respect protected areas

Be aware of the locations of protected areas

Respect the restrictions that apply to these sites

Do not damage, destroy or remove artefacts from Historic sites or monuments

3. Respect scientific research

Obtain permission before visiting Antarctic science stations

Do not interfere in any way with scientific equipment, study sites or field camps

4. Be safe

Know your capabilities and act with safety in mind

Keep a safe distance from all wildlife

Do not stray from the group

Do not walk onto glaciers or large snowfields unless properly trained

5. Keep Antarctica pristine

Do not litter

Do not deface or graffiti rocks and buildings

Do not remove artefacts as souvenirs. This includes: rocks, bones, fossils and contents of buildings

IAATO Members also operate with codes of conduct that limit approach distances and behaviour in the vicinity of wildlife aggregations. In addition, the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties have adopted a series of Site Guidelines for Visitors for the most visited sites in Antarctica.