

Antarctic Treaty General Guidelines

(RECOMMENDATION 3, 2011)

General 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 a relevant national authority or if they have met all the requirements of their 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, abide by these guidelines, 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 https://www.ats.aq/devAS/ats_other_siteguidelines.aspx.



Secretariat
of the
Antarctic Treaty

Protect Antarctic Wildlife

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

Wildlife

- When in the vicinity of wildlife, walk slowly and carefully and keep noise to a minimum.
- Maintain an appropriate distance from wildlife. While in many cases a greater distance may be appropriate, in general don't approach closer than 5m. Abide by any guidance on distances in site specific guidelines.
- 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.
- Every situation is different. Consider the topography and the individual circumstances of the site, as these may have an impact on the vulnerability of wildlife to disturbance.
- 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. Do not use guns or explosives.

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 minimise 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 a relevant 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.

- Obtain permission before visiting Antarctic stations. Reconfirm scheduled visits no less than 24-72 hours before arriving.
- Comply with any site specific rules when visiting Antarctic stations.
- 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 other 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 should be avoided. 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 minimise 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 mammals. 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, or animals and must be checked for the presence of any soil, plants, or animals 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.

*A ship is defined as a vessel which carries more than 12 passengers