

# ANTARCTIC TREATY RECOMMENDATION XVIII-1



## GUIDANCE FOR VISITORS TO THE ANTARCTIC

Activities in the Antarctic are governed by the Antarctic Treaty and associated agreements, referred to collectively as the Antarctic Treaty System. In 1959 the Treaty established Antarctica as a zone of peace and science.

In 1991 the Consultative Parties to the Antarctic Treaty adopted the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty. The Protocol sets out environmental principles, procedures and obligations for the comprehensive protection of the Antarctic environment and its dependent and associated ecosystems. The Consultative Parties have agreed that, in accordance with their legal systems, the provisions of the Protocol should be applied as appropriate. Organizers and operators will continue adherence to existing regulations and provide leadership in new and improved efforts.

The Environmental Protocol applies to tourism and non-governmental activities, as well as governmental activities in the Antarctic Treaty area. It is intended to ensure that these activities do not have adverse impacts on the Antarctic environment, or on its scientific and aesthetic values.

This Guidance for Visitors to the Antarctic is intended to ensure that all visitors are aware of, and therefore able to comply with, the Treaty and the Protocol. Visitors are, of course, bound by their own national laws and regulations applicable to activities in the Antarctic.

## PROTECT ANTARCTIC WILDLIFE

Taking of, or harmful interference with Antarctic wildlife is prohibited except in accordance with a permit issued by a national authority.

- Do not use aircraft, vessels, small boats, or other means of transport in ways that disturb wildlife, either at sea or on land.
- Do not feed, touch, or handle birds or seals, or approach or photograph them in ways that cause them to alter their behavior. Special care is needed when animals are breeding or molting.
- Do not damage plants by walking, driving, or landing on extensive moss beds or lichen-covered scree slopes.
- Do not use guns or explosives. Keep noise to the minimum to avoid frightening wildlife.
- Do not bring non-native plants or animals into the antarctic, such as live poultry, pet dogs and cats, or house plants.

## RESPECT PROTECTED AREAS

A variety of areas in the Antarctic have been afforded special protection because of their particular ecological, scientific, historic, or other values. Entry into certain areas may be prohibited except in accordance with a permit issued by an appropriate national authority. Activities in and near designated Historic Sites and Monuments and certain other areas may be subject to special restrictions.

- Know the location of areas that have been granted special protection and any restrictions regarding entry and activities that can be carried out in and near them.
- Observe applicable restrictions.

Do not damage, remove, or destroy Historic Sites or Monuments or any artifacts associated with them.

## RESPECT SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Do not interfere with scientific research, facilities, or equipment.

- Obtain permission before visiting Antarctic science and support facilities, reconfirm arrangements 24-72 hours before arrival, and comply with the rules regarding such visits.
- Do not interfere with or remove scientific equipment or marker posts, and do not disturb experimental study sites, field camps, or supplies.

## BE SAFE

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

- 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 all wildlife, both on land and at sea.
- Take note of, and act on, the advice and instructions from your leaders; do not stray from your group.
- Do not walk onto glaciers or large snow fields without the 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, particularly around buildings, and take great care to safeguard against the danger of fire. This is a real hazard in the dry environment of Antarctica.

## KEEP ANTARCTICA PRISTINE

Antarctica remains relatively pristine, the largest wilderness area on earth. It has not yet been subjected to large scale human perturbations. Please keep it that way.

- Do not dispose of litter or garbage on land. Open burning is prohibited.
- Do not disturb or pollute lakes or streams. Any materials discarded at sea must be disposed of properly.
- Do not paint or engrave names or graffiti on rocks or buildings.
- Do not collect or take away biological or geological specimens or man-made artifacts as souvenirs, including rocks, bones, eggs, fossils, and parts or contents of buildings.
- Do not deface or vandalize buildings, whether occupied, abandoned, or unoccupied, or emergency refuges.

These internationally agreed guidelines apply to all visitors to Antarctica, including scientists and support staff working for governmental research programs, as well as participants on organized cruises and other expeditions, and individual visitors. The essential provisions are reflected in national laws, so violations may be subject to legal sanctions including fines or even imprisonment.

The leaders and staff on this expedition are familiar with these guidelines and will explain the reasons behind them. They will help you to adhere to them. But you, too, have a part to play. By encouraging your fellow visitors to follow your own environmentally-conscious behaviour, you will help us to ensure that Antarctica will remain pristine for the enjoyment of future generations. We appreciate your cooperation.