

IAATO Observation Requirements for Operator and Observer

IAATO Observer Program

All IAATO Operator companies are required to carry an IAATO-approved observer during the first Antarctic season of a new-build/newly converted vessel or during the first year of operation of a new deep field camp, unless exempted by the Executive Committee on the advice of the Membership Committee.

Additionally, each IAATO vessel or deep field camp is required to be observed once every 5 years of Antarctic operation.

Due to the high number of Observations which must be scheduled and conducted each season, it is imperative that member operators are responsive to the Secretariat and the Observer and that they adhere to the deadlines and requirements of this program as set forth in this document. Failure to do so may result in a referral to the Compliance and Dispute Resolution Committee for non-compliance.

If an operator is notified that they are due to have an observation and fail to comply for two consecutive seasons, they will be considered in non-compliance with IAATO policy.

A. Observer Qualifications:

To ensure adequate knowledge of IAATO procedures and protocols, every IAATO Observer must take and pass the Peninsula & South Georgia for Observers online assessment, depending on the itinerary of their observation trip.

In addition,

1. An IAATO observer cannot be a member of the operator company's paid expedition/office/contracted staff.
2. An observer can be IAATO Secretariat paid staff.
3. The observer should have one or more of the following qualifications:
 - a. Antarctic national program work experience involving in-depth knowledge of Antarctica;
 - b. Antarctic work experience on board commercial tourism vessels or land-based tourism;
 - c. Experience in environmental management in wilderness areas;
 - d. Experience in environmental monitoring and/or knowledge of Polar Regions ecosystems;
 - e. Experience in Tourism Management and Sustainable Tourism.

B. IAATO Secretariat Responsibilities:

4. The IAATO Secretariat will inform members who are expected to have an observation by May 31st prior to the upcoming season.
5. The IAATO Secretariat will appoint an observer for the Operator. The IAATO Secretariat will provide the Operator with the potential observer's CV/credentials for the Operator's approval. The Operator has the right to refuse an observer if they find evidence of any conflict of interest with the chosen observer except in the case where an IAATO Secretariat member is assigned as the observer.
6. The goal is to have the observer appointed at least three months prior to the expedition where possible.
7. Where appropriate, IAATO will appoint an observer with specialist skills (e.g., waste management or navigational expertise).
8. Effort will be made to coordinate a convenient departure date and an observer whose expertise matches the company's operations so that the observation is a positive experience for all involved.
9. If available, IAATO will provide the observer a copy of a previous observer report for the vessel or deep field operation to be observed.
10. IAATO will provide a printout of vessel technical specs from the IAATO Vessel Database to the Observer prior to the observation.



11. IAATO will provide the observer with the appropriate IAATO Observer Report Checklist.
12. In preparation for the voyage or land-based operation and prior to departure the following will be provided for the Observer:
 - a. Economy-class round trip airfare, hotel, reasonable meal/travel expenses, and airport departure taxes;
 - b. Initial coordination of communications between the observer and the operator;
 - c. Initial overview and introduction to the IAATO observation process;
 - d. A training session for observers will be conducted via webinar and will be recorded as a reference;
 - e. An IAATO Non-Disclosure Agreement, to be signed by the observer and returned to IAATO;
 - f. Any other relevant IAATO documentation or policies.
13. IAATO will circulate a summary report of the season's mandatory observations including lessons learned compiled by the Membership Committee to members ahead of the IAATO annual meeting.

C. IAATO Operator Responsibilities:

14. Operators shall inform the IAATO Secretariat of the dates and ports of their preferred observer trip for which they have reserved a berth no later than June 30th prior to the upcoming season.
15. Prior to departure, in the same timeline as with guests, the operator should send to the observer:
 - a. all pre-trip information provided to passengers; and
 - b. all forms, especially medical forms, required to be completed and returned by passengers.
16. Operators shall provide the observer with all permits, advance notifications, environmental assessment documents as appropriate from their national competent authority in advance of the observation so that the observer has ample time to thoroughly review each document.
17. No less than one month prior to departure, the operator should send the following to the Observer and copy to IAATO's **Director of Governance and Finance (electronic copies)**: **Note:** *If the operator uses a third party/charterer to distribute pre-trip information, the operator is still responsible for sending the observer the appropriate information.*
 - a. A complete list of expedition staff and officers and their specific Antarctic experience.
 - b. The Advance Notification and Environmental Impact Assessment, including any updates or supplements.
 - c. Authorization letter by competent authority and/or authorization by appropriate government, or relevant acknowledging documents.
 - d. Acknowledgement that the current IAATO Field Operations Manual (FOM) will be available on board, or in camp, for use by all expedition personnel.
 - e. The operator must confirm to the observer that all ship/airplane schedules and contact information have been brought up-to-date and submitted as appropriate to IAATO **and** that IAATO Emergency and Member Contact (EMER) information has been checked and updated in the IAATO database.
18. The observer will be provided with a berth or bed.
19. The observer is invited to attend expedition staff briefings and planning meetings where appropriate in order to gain better insight into the overall operation and planning.
20. If appropriate, the observer can be invited by the Operator member company to give a presentation or lecture on their area of expertise during the trip.
21. At no time will an observer be put in a position where their integrity could be compromised, or the validity of the observer report brought into question.
22. If a medevac is needed for any reason, the company should treat the observer as they would any other passenger.
23. At the conclusion of the expedition, the operator should confirm to the observer that all Post Visit Site Reports (PVRs) and End-of-Season Report (EOS) will be submitted to IAATO and appropriate government entity(s), according to internal company policy.
24. The operator should arrange to discuss the conclusions of the report with the observer prior to disembarkation.



D. Observer Responsibilities:

- 1.** The observer must have a valid passport and secure appropriate visas if required. (e.g., Argentina, Chile, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, etc.). Passports must NOT have an expiration date within six months of departure.
- 2.** Provide the company with necessary documents consistent with all passengers' requirements, such as medical certificate, proof of emergency medical/evacuation/repatriation insurance coverage, etc.;
- 3.** Prior to booking, the observer will coordinate, transport to and from their home airport with the IAATO Secretariat;
 - a.** Any deviations from standard routing or extended days will be at the observer's own cost.
- 4.** The observer will be expected to follow the Operator's passenger terms and conditions.
- 5.** A draft report and/or any concerns must be discussed with pertinent expedition and/or home office staff before the end of the expedition;
- 6.** The final observer report should be submitted by e-mail to the IAATO Secretariat (Director of Governance and Finance) and operator member company within two-weeks of the conclusion of the expedition;
- 7.** The observer is responsible for trip cancellation/interruption insurance in an amount sufficient for Antarctica;
 - a.** If the observer does not have insurance which covers Antarctic evacuation/repatriation, then insurance must be procured prior to the departure and reasonable costs will be reimbursed by IAATO.
- 8.** The observer must bring appropriate personal foul weather clothing and boots, if not provided by the Operator;
- 9.** While on board or in camp, the observer must attend all safety and other appropriate briefings, lectures where appropriate, and participate in and/or be included on all landings or excursions.
- 10.** No gifts of any kind, other than those offered to other passengers, should be accepted by any observer, at any time.