

Criteria Used by Expedition Leaders in Itinerary Planning and Site Selection for Expedition Cruising in the Antarctic Peninsula

Introduction

Selecting sites to visit during each ship borne tourist expedition to the Antarctic Peninsula occurs in two phases. Phase one involved initial itineraries being planned and circulated to other tour ships prior to the commencement of the expedition. The second phase involves adjustments to the initial itinerary on a day-to-day basis as a result of conditions and opportunities encountered en route.

With the majority of the companies, both phases of the detailed itinerary planning and site selection are implemented by the Expedition Leader. Though in some

cases the company running the ship carries out the phase one planning, the expedition leader being responsible only for phase two, the criteria used in the decision making process does not vary significantly.

This report details the criteria considered in the decision making process for both phases. Section B deals with phase one. It concentrates on the decision making process involved in selecting sites in the context of the voyage as a whole. Section C assesses phase two, detailing criteria when used when considering landing passengers at a specific site.

Phase One: Planning

- Phase one, the initial itinerary, is concerned with site selection in the context of a voyage as a whole. The aim is to achieve an expedition that gives passengers an overview of the area being visited.
- Certain parameters, such as number of days in the Antarctic region and the marketing emphasis, e.g. ice cruises; historical expeditions etc are set in site selection. Other factors, which dictate itinerary planning, are vessel speeds and the number of passengers involved.
- There are a number of requisite sites or features to be incorporated into an itinerary (though these may be influenced by the marketing emphasis). These features are:
 - Visits to renowned sites e.g. Deception Island, Paradise Bay and Lemaire Channel: Key components of the natural history e.g. specific bird and marine mammal spp. Geologic features etc.
 - A landing on the Antarctic continent
 - Sites of historic interest, both exploration and sealing and whaling
 - A visit to a scientific station

The extent to which each of these aspects is emphasized varies according to the personnel involved and time constraints.

- Often several sites meet the criteria listed above. The decision of which site to visit and at what stage in the expedition depends on several factors. Two key principles are:
 - To start with landings which are simple. In this instance, simple can be defined as sites which: are usually sheltered both at the vessel's gangway and at the landing point, have ample space near the landing point for passengers to adjust to the environment and operation procedures (adjustments to clothing and equipment etc.) without disrupting the wildlife; and are safe and easy to move around.
 - To manage expectations, i.e. try to ensure that each day is better than the day before. Often areas, which have high species diversity, spectacular scenery or unusual occurrences, are perceived as more exciting. Equally such areas often require better understanding of the codes of conduct because of increased awareness of the biota and potential for disturbance; safety reasons or proximity to protected areas.
- Final decisions in selecting routes and sites are based on local knowledge of the areas involved, taking into account the site's attractions and how they fit in with what has been experienced and will be experienced, the overall route plan, including planned landings is then circulated to other vessel operating in the areas, to avoid two vessels trying to land at the same site at the same time. It is based on the assumption that conditions will not be prohibitive to landing passengers.

Phase Two: Adjustments in Itineraries

- Adjustments often have to be made of daily itineraries. This is due to weather and ice conditions, other ships schedules, and opportunities, which may become apparent during the voyage. If adjustments are made 24 hours+ in advance, notification is usually sent to other vessels to avoid conflict.
- The criteria considered by an expedition leader when making the decision of whether to go to a site, assessing if the landing is feasible and if so, how it should be organized, fall into 3 categories:
 - Attraction of the site: i.e. why choose to land at this site? Is there a more suitable alternative site within reasonable steaming distance? What activities are possible here?
e.g. the factors mentioned in B3 i.e. renowned natural history, continent landing, historical, scientific, etc.
 - Shore operation: do the characteristics of the site require particular visitor control methods to be used to minimize potential disturbance of the environment and ensure safety? If so what? E.g. zodiac cruise only, guided walks, specific conduct reminders etc.
 - Marine operation: Are the conditions good enough and stable enough to allow a landing? If so how should the zodiac operations be organized e.g. consider ship to shore distance; conditions at landing site and gangway; selection of best landing point; potential hazards; tide and current influences; number of shore men required; number of zodiacs etc.
- Based on these criteria the expedition leader is able to decide whether or not land at a particular site, conditions permitting. The Expedition Leader is also able to control the use of the site to ensure that; the landing is safe; it does not encroach areas into protected areas; and that the visit causes minimal disturbance to local environment.

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