

Criteria for Assessing New Sites

Periodically, visitor landings take place at sites that have not been visited before (at all, or by those involved in the expedition) and for which there is only limited information available. These opportunistic visits are rarely pre-planned: more often they arise from adjustments to itineraries, although occasionally simply to explore a new area. Before landing passengers, the expedition leader and staff reconnoitre the site to assess practicability, environmental sensitivity, and safety of the landing.

The following guidelines formalise the on-going process of assessment prior to landing visitors which are used by IAATO member operators with the aim of encouraging similar assessments by other non-IAATO 'visitors'. These criteria should be considered in conjunction with the other guidelines that regulate IAATO-member shore activities.

Environmental & scientific considerations

- Is the site in close proximity to a protected area?
- Is there unusually high species diversity?
- Are there species on the edge of their biogeographical distribution?
- Are there rare species that may be easily disturbed?
- Are there giant petrel, Antarctic tern or Kelp gull nesting sites that may be easily disturbed?
- Are there geological or physical features that maybe easily disturbed?
- Are there extensive areas of vegetation to be avoided?
- Are there any scientific activities taking place which might be disturbed
- Does the site hold unusually high scientific values that you are aware of? (e.g. on Deception Island, in the Dry valleys etc.)

Visitor Management considerations

- Is there sufficient visitor space to land up to 100 people?
- Is it an area which requires small guided groups?
- Are there specific areas to keep visitors out of or away from?

Safety considerations.

- How exposed is the landing area, and is it safe for small boat operations?
- Are there any specific environmental hazards which visitors need to be kept away from?