

Detailed guide: Visiting Antarctica

Updated: Addition of IEE information

Requirements for visiting Antarctica

The [Antarctic Treaty](#) signed in Washington on 1 December 1959 preserves the Antarctic continent for peaceful and scientific use.

The Antarctic Treaty's Protocol on Environmental Protection, signed in 1991, is the only international agreement designed to protect an entire continent. It ensures that all human activity in Antarctica is carefully planned and managed. It enables a range of human activity to take place in Antarctica including scientific research, well-managed, environmentally sensitive tourism, and exploration. Crucially, the Protocol prohibits commercial mining and protects vulnerable areas, animals and plants.

The Antarctic Treaty does not prevent tourists, military personnel or scientific researchers from being present in Antarctica – but they do require an appropriate permit from a Treaty Party.

Permit criteria

Anyone on a British expedition to Antarctica or taking a British vessel or aircraft into Antarctica will need to apply for a permit from the Polar Regions Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).

A British expedition is one organised in the UK, or one where the last place of departure for Antarctica is the UK, a British overseas territory, or a Crown Dependency. 'Expedition' consists of a single person or group, undertaking a tour or journey of any purpose, including activities such as landing ashore, skiing, kayaking, small boat activities, climbing, diving or any related activity.

You do not need a permit for:

- ships or aircraft travelling to an immediate destination outside Antarctica
- fishing vessels, unless they are carrying out functions related to an expedition
- expeditions organised in and authorised in writing by another contracting party (country) to the Environmental Protocol to the Antarctic Treaty

It is also unlikely that you will need a permit if you are a passenger on an organised visit to Antarctica, as your tour operator would usually arrange this. However you should confirm this with them before travelling. Contact the Polar Regions Department if you are still unsure.

Applying for a permit

You should submit applications for permits as far in advance as possible. This should be at least 4 months for a new or unusual application, or at least 2 months before the date of your departure if you have previously obtained a permit for summer activities.

Organisers must demonstrate that they are sufficiently prepared for a visit to Antarctica. You should discuss your plans informally with the Polar Regions Department before you begin completing the permit application. This is especially important if your expedition involves specialist activities such as extreme sports, extended trips or multiple transport options.

Application forms and guidance

For a land or vessel based expedition you can download the permit application form and guidance below. For further information please contact the Polar Regions Department. Before completing either application form,

[Expedition Permit Application Form](#)

(MS Word Document, 77.3KB)

[Expedition Permit Application Guidance Notes](#)

(PDF, 950KB, 16 pages)

If you plan to undertake more specialist activities in Antarctic (such as wildlife monitoring or scientific research) it is likely you will need a separate permit. For further information please contact the Polar Regions Department.

[Specialist Permit Application Form](#)

(MS Word Document, 65.3KB)

[Specialist Permit Application Guidance Notes](#)

(PDF, 970KB, 12 pages)

[Historic Site and Monument Application Form](#)

(MS Word Document, 59.7KB)

Once the expedition is complete, you will need to complete a Post Visit Report. Permit holders who are members of the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO) need only to provide the Polar Regions Department of the Post Visit Report prepared by IAATO.

[Post Visit Report: Expedition, Vessel and/or Aircraft](#)

(MS Word Document, 59.1KB)

[Post Visit Report: Specialist Activities](#)

(MS Word Document, 56.2KB)

How to contact the Polar Regions Department

Telephone: 020 7008 1500

Email: polarregions@fco.gov.uk

Address:

Polar Regions Department

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Room W2.80

King Charles Street

London

SW1A 2AH

Publishing application details

Applicants should be aware that within 10 days from the Polar Regions Department confirming receipt of any permit applications, the FCO will openly publish information relating to these applications on this website. This will include application type, applicant name, duration of visit, proposed itinerary and the contact details of the applicant.

Please also see our [privacy notice](#)

UK Antarctic enforcement policy and procedures

The FCO is responsible for ensuring that the UK's Antarctic legislation is fully complied with. See our [UK Antarctic Enforcement Policy and Procedures page](#) for further details.

Comprehensive Environmental Evaluations (CEEs) received for activity in Antarctica

Name	Company	Purpose and location	Date received and CEE
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Name	Company	Purpose and location	Date received and CEE
BAS Environment Office information@bas.ac.uk	British Antarctic Survey	Replacement of Rothera Wharf and stabilisation of the area around the runway at Rothera Station	January 2018 – available at www.bas.ac.uk

Initial Environmental Evaluations (IEEs) received for activity in Antarctica 2018 to 2019

Name	Company	Purpose and location	Date received and IEE
BAS Environment Office information@bas.ac.uk	British Antarctic Survey	Proposed Deep Ice Core Drilling Project on Skytrain Ice Rise, Antarctica	September 2018 – available at www.bas.ac.uk

Applications received for expeditions from the 2018 to 2019 season

Permit applicant	Vessel/Aircraft name	Purpose and date of visit	Brief itinerary
Oliver Plunkett Oliver.plunkett@macswitzerland.ch	SA Agulhas II	Weddell Sea Exhibition 2019 28 December 2018 to 28 February 2019	Weddell Sea area including Larsen C Ice Shelf
Robert Dougall McCallum rob@eyos-expeditions.com	DSSV Pressure Drop	Scientific research 1 January 2019 to 30 January 2019	Lander deployment, South Sandwich Trench
Skip Novak skipnovak@pelagic.co.uk	Pelagic Australis	Tourism 1 December 2018 to 10 April 2019	South Shetland Islands, Antarctic Peninsula
Dr Dorothea Bakker d.bakker@uea.ac.uk	Polarstern	Scientific research 15 December 2018 to 7 February 2019	Weddell Sea
Dr Ursula Witte u.witte@abnd.ac.uk	Polarstern	Scientific research 9 January 2019 to 10 April 2019	Weddell Sea area including Larsen C, Larsen B & A

Permit applicant	Vessel/Aircraft name	Purpose and date of visit	Brief itinerary
Julian Cope jcope@tglobal.com	DS Wisconsin	Transport construction materials 1 December 2018 to 7 January 2019	Rothera Wharf
Dr Tom Hart tom.hart@zoo.ox.ac.uk	MV Ocean Endeavour	Scientific Research 16 October 2018 to 26 January 2019	Antarctic Peninsula, South Shetland Islands, South Orkney Islands
Robert Dougall McCallum rob@eyos-expeditions.com	Rosehearty	Tourism 14 December 2018 to 2 February 2019	Northern and western parts of the Antarctic Peninsula
Jerome Ponchet Golden.fleece@horizon.co.fk	Golden Fleece	Tourism 13 December 2018 to 16 February 2019	Antarctic Peninsula
Peter Watson peter.lb.watson@gmail.com	Grey Wolf	Tourism 16 November 2018 to 24 February 2019	Antarctic Peninsula
Patrick Woodhead patrick@white-desert.com		Tourism 25 October 2018 to 28 February 2019	Dronning Maud Land
Robert Dougall McCallum rob@eyos-expeditions.com	Legend	Tourism 18 December 2018 to 5 March 2019	Northern and western parts of the Antarctic Peninsula
Emil Grimsson emil@arctictrucks.is		Logistics and Tourism 12 November 2018 to 26 January 2019	Union Glacier, Ross Ice Shelf, Ronne Ice Shelf, South Pole, Leverett Glacier, Constellation Inlet, Amundsen Coast, Axel Heiberg Glacier

Permit applicant	Vessel/Aircraft name	Purpose and date of visit	Brief itinerary
Tim Cochrane timc@noble-caledonia.co.uk	Island Sky	Tourism 23 November 2018 to 24 January 2019	Antarctic Peninsula, South Shetland Islands, South Orkney Islands
Robert Dougall McCallum rob@eyos-expeditions.com	Gayle Force	Tourism 16 January 2019 to 2 February 2019	Northern and western parts of the Antarctic Peninsula
Dame Jane Francis janefr@bas.ac.uk		Extraction and use of material in Rothera Wharf redevelopment 14 October 2018 to 31 May 2020	Rothera Point, Antarctic Peninsula
Katherine Short Katort80@bas.ac.uk	Gamechanger, Legend, Planet Nine	Scientific research 30 November 2018 to 28 February 2019	Antarctic Peninsula