



Important update regarding Avian Influenza and travel to Antarctica

Update: 03 June 2024

As you prepare for your upcoming Antarctic expedition, we want to ensure you are up to date with the latest information regarding the Avian Influenza that has been recently detected in some birds and seals in the Antarctic region. Our commitment to your safety onboard and protecting the unique Antarctic wildlife remains unwavering.

Since early 2024, the Avian Influenza virus has been detected on the Antarctic Peninsula, South Georgia, and the Falkland Islands. Thanks to straightforward management procedures, expedition ships have continued safely visiting these remarkable destinations while protecting their exceptional wildlife.

What is Avian Influenza?

Avian Influenza is a naturally occurring virus in wild birds, spread through faeces and respiratory secretions. Most strains are harmless, but the H5N1 strain, Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), poses a higher risk to animals. While it primarily affects birds, a substrain can impact some wild mammals near infected birds. The risk to humans is, however, very low.

Since 2020, HPAI has spread via migratory birds across Asia, Europe, and the Americas, causing significant mortality, especially among seabirds. It reached South Georgia in late 2023 and was detected on the Antarctic Peninsula in February 2024, mainly affecting migratory animals like Skuas, Elephant seals, and Fur seals.

What does this mean for your Antarctic expedition with us?

Antarctica remains open for exploration this coming 2024/25 season, and we look forward to delivering an excellent season for our guests. The extensive length and variety of landing sites along the Antarctic Peninsula allow ships to flexibly avoid areas that may be potentially affected by Avian Influenza, ensuring a fantastic Antarctic expedition experience.

IAATO (International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators) and Antarctic cruise operators anticipated the arrival of Avian Influenza and successfully implemented enhanced biosecurity measures since late 2022. With valuable experience managing Avian Influenza in South Georgia over the past year, we are well-prepared to continue offering the best of Antarctica to our guests.

Our onboard protocols ensure stringent measures to safeguard our guests, wildlife, and the local environment:

1. Enhanced Safety Measures:

To minimise the risk of Avian Influenza transmission, we've implemented enhanced biosecurity measures. These include thorough equipment cleaning before and after landings and restrictions on specific activities, such as sitting or kneeling on the ground. Your Expedition Team will provide detailed guidance to ensure compliance with these measures.

2. Pre-Excursion Land Surveys by Expedition Team:

Before landings, your Expedition Team will thoroughly inspect potential landing sites and determine any risks.

3. Embrace Flexibility:

Travelling in such southerly latitudes always presents challenges and requires a degree of flexibility in the actual daily program. Your Expedition Leader is a master of adaptation and will keep you updated and well-briefed throughout your trip. If some locations become temporarily closed to landings, we may offer a Zodiac cruise to explore the surroundings. Sometimes, specific camping locations may be closed, and we will seek alternative sites amidst beautiful scenery far from any affected wildlife.

Our ultimate goal is to safeguard the environment and preserve the wonders of Antarctica for future generations, all while ensuring a unique Antarctic experience for you. Rest assured, we closely monitor any potential impact on your itinerary and will promptly communicate any updates. Despite these developments, we anticipate no 2024/25 season disruptions.

Thank you for choosing us for your Antarctic expedition. We can't wait to embark on this unforgettable adventure with you.

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