Best Practice Guidelines for expedition vessel Operations in the Arctic

Information Paper Presentation # 4

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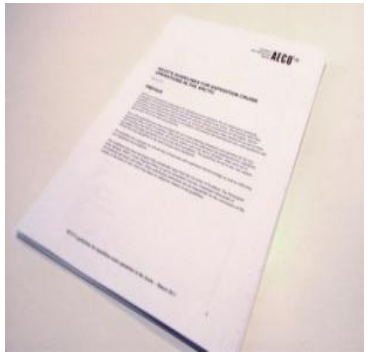
Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators

Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators AECO

- Member organization founded in 2003 with the **overall goal** to:
  - ensure environmentally friendly, responsible and safe cruise tourism in the Arctic, and
  - advocate for the expedition cruise industry, and AECO's members interests
- AECO currently have 63 members 40 of which operate approximately 45 expedition cruise vessels all over the Arctic
- AECO members have committed to AECO's guidelines

AECO Guidelines Overview



Operational guidelines

AECO's comprehensive guidelines for cruise operators in the Arctic

Visitors guidelines

AECO's guidelines for visitors

Animated see:

bit.ly/1G2btW6

New community

Wildlife guidelines

Considerations to prevent disturbance of wildlife

New coming up

Biosecurity guidelines

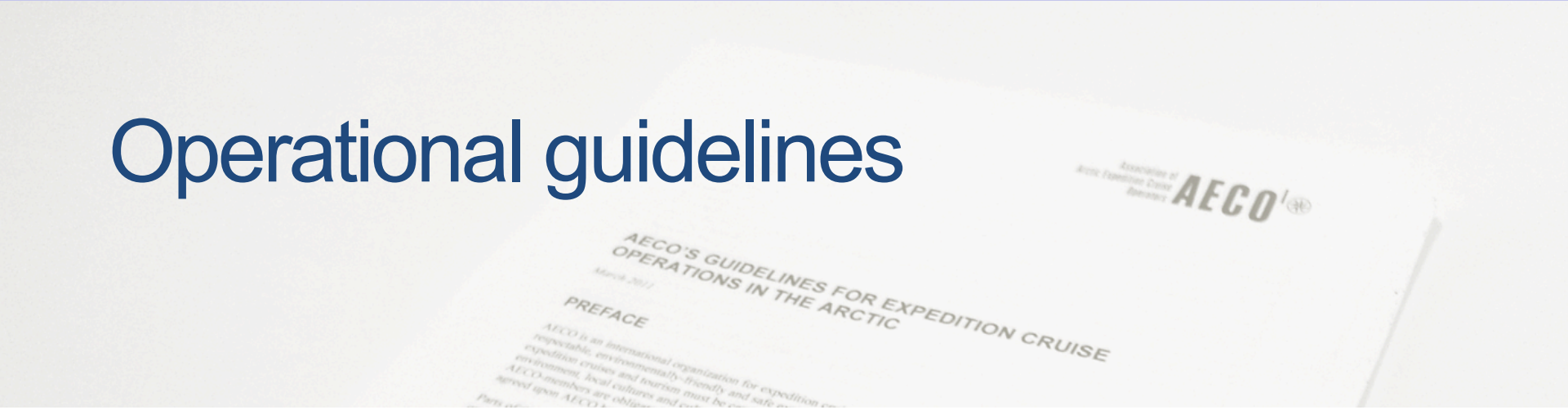
Research-based measures to prevent the introduction of alien species

Site specific guidelines

Site specific guidelines for sites in Svalbard

New coming up

Operational guidelines



- Detailed regulations for Arctic operations in regard to environmental and safety considerations, as well as cultural and social interactions
- AECO's Operational guidelines have been initiated and developed by AECO's members
- All AECO members are obliged to comply with AECO's operational and other guidelines

Operational guidelines

— Content

- Planning procedures
- Co-operation
- Contacts
- Education- and information requirements
- Equipment
- Group sizes, distances, speed, noise and paths
- Considerations, behavior
- Reports

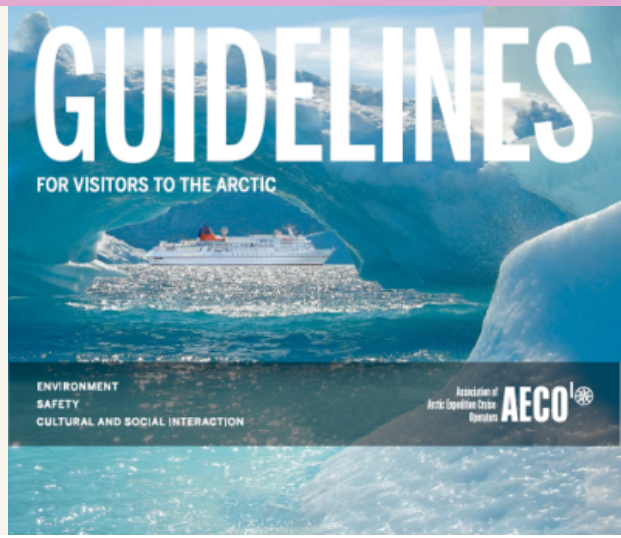
Visitors guidelines

— Safe, considerate and environmentally friendly tourism

- All operators responsibility
- Attention and respect required

Visitors guidelines

— A few general rules



- Take nothing with you – leave nothing behind
- Do not pick the plants and flowers
- Keep a no-disturbance distance from birds and animals.
  Avoid noise, keep conversations low and stay away from nesting birds
- Leave cultural remains alone
- Respect local culture and support local communities

Visitors guidelines

— Precautions regarding landings

- Avoid walking on wet vegetated areas
- If possible, do not step on flowers or plant beds
- Do not build or alter cairns
  – they may be signposts
- Do not touch dead birds or animals
  – there has been rabies in Arctic regions

Visitors guidelines

— Small boat excursions

- Be sure to always have your life vests on properly
- One passenger enters and leaves the boat at a time
- Use the sailors grip when embarking and disembarking the boat
- Always remain seated
  Never more than one standing passenger at any time
- Secure equipment and belongings to avoid losing items overboard

Visitors guidelines

— Polar bears precautions

- Take the polar bear danger seriously
- Your guides will carry firearms and other bear deterrents
- The guides have been trained in use and handling of firearms
- Always follow instructions given by your expedition leader or guide

Visitors guidelines

— Precautions regarding dogs

- Arctic dogs are potentially dangerous
- Never approach or attempt to pet or feed arctic dogs without permission and supervision from the dog owner/handler

Visitors guidelines

— Cultural interaction

- Respect local cultures
- Respect privacy; keep a good distance from private houses and never glance or photograph through private windows
- Ask before you photograph – a hesitation means no
- Buy local souvenirs and products – look for CITES

Visitors guidelines

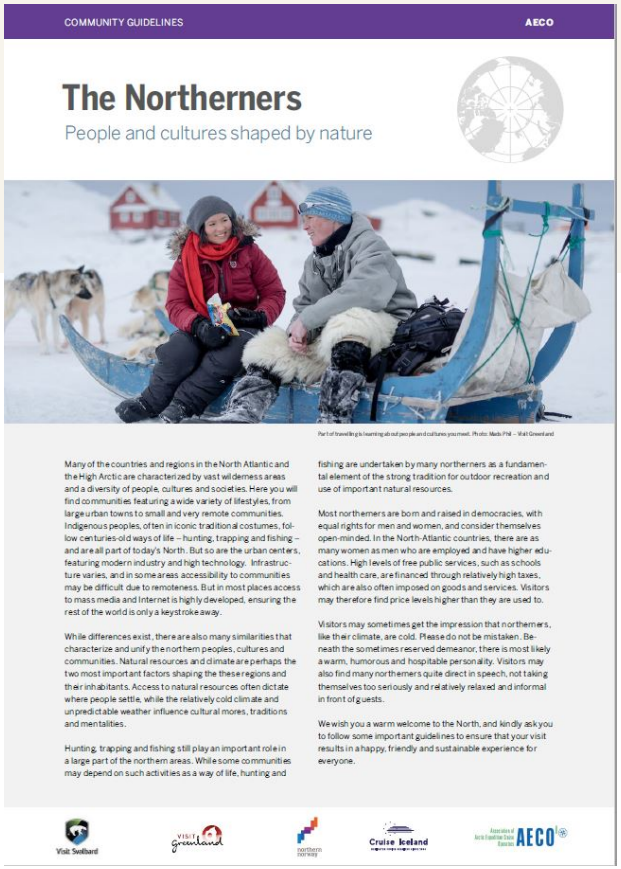
— Cultural understanding

- Tourism can be a great way of learning about, promoting and creating tolerance between people with different backgrounds and cultures
- Do not judge other cultures based on own sense of reality, norms and values
- Cultures are different
- Do not expect to find everything as it is at home – you have left home to find things different

Animated guidelines

— See AECO's animated guidelines for visitors here

New Community guidelines



COMMUNITY GUIDELINES AECO

The Northerners

People and cultures shaped by nature

Part of travelling is learning about people and cultures you meet. Photo: Mads Pihl – Visit Greenland

Many of the countries and regions in the North Atlantic and the High Arctic are characterized by vast wilderness areas and a diversity of people, cultures and societies. Here you will find communities featuring a wide variety of lifestyles, from large urban towns to small and very remote communities. Indigenous peoples, often in iconic traditional costumes, follow centuries-old ways of life – hunting, trapping and fishing – and are all part of today's North. But so are the urban centers, featuring modern industry and high technology. Infrastructure varies, and in some areas accessibility to communities may be difficult due to remoteness. But in most places access to mass media and Internet is highly developed, ensuring the rest of the world is only a keystroke away.

While differences exist, there are also many similarities that characterize and unify the northern peoples, cultures and communities. Natural resources and climate are perhaps the two most important factors shaping the these regions and their inhabitants. Access to natural resources often dictate where people settle, while the relatively cold climate and unpredictable weather influence cultural mores, traditions and mentalities.

Hunting, trapping and fishing still play an important role in a large part of the northern areas. While some communities may depend on such activities as a way of life, hunting and fishing are undertaken by many northerners as a fundamental element of the strong tradition for outdoor recreation and use of important natural resources.

Most northerners are born and raised in democracies, with equal rights for men and women, and consider themselves open-minded. In the North-Atlantic countries, there are as many women as men who are employed and have higher educations. High levels of free public services, such as schools and health care, are financed through relatively high taxes, which are also often imposed on goods and services. Visitors may therefore find price levels higher than they are used to.

Visitors may sometimes get the impression that northerners, like their climate, are cold. Please do not be mistaken. Beneath the sometimes reserved demeanor, there is most likely a warm, humorous and hospitable personality. Visitors may also find many northerners quite direct in speech, not taking themselves too seriously and relatively relaxed and informal in front of guests.

We wish you a warm welcome to the North, and kindly ask you to follow some important guidelines to ensure that your visit results in a happy, friendly and sustainable experience for everyone.

Visit Svalbard · Visit Greenland · Northern Norway · Cruise Iceland · Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators AECO

COMMUNITY GUIDELINES AECO

Guidelines

When visiting the North, remember that you have left home to gain new experiences and insight into the lives of others. It's important not to judge other cultures based on one's own sense of reality, norms and values. Make an effort to understand and respect the idea that cultures can be different.

Interact with the people you meet
Photo: Mads Pihl – Visit Greenland

Part of travelling is learning about people and cultures you meet
Photo: Magnus Critten

Buy local souvenirs, but ensure that you can export them to your home country
Photo: Dyre van Bergamo

Perhaps they do not appreciate you taking photos of their private ceremony?
Photo: Kristin Holand Olsen

Talk to and not about the people you meet
Photo: Mads Pihl – Visit Greenland

Tourists meet locals in a friendly game of soccer
Photo: Mads Pihl – Visit Greenland

- Engage the people and cultures with respect; an open mind leads to the best experiences.
- Talk to, and not about, the people you meet.
- Think of yourself as an ambassador for your country and culture, as the locals are for theirs. Politeness and good manners are always appreciated.
- Please do not litter. In remote areas, please also consider the community's ability to handle waste. Perhaps you should bring some of it, and especially special category waste, back with you.
- You are encouraged to buy local souvenirs and products, to support and sustain the community you are visiting.
- In most settlements, supplies are regularly delivered and you should feel free to buy what is offered in stores and markets. In smaller, more remote settlements where new supplies do not come often, there might be limited access to some items, e.g. fresh food. In these places, it is recommended to ask advice from your guide or the locals before you buy products such as fresh fruits and vegetables.
- It is not customary to bargain in these parts of the world, not even in markets.
- Please always respect privacy and private property, and places of religious or cultural significance.
  - Never enter a private house without an invitation
  - Do not glance or photograph through windows
  - Ask before you take photographs of people – a hesitation means no
  - Never photograph or give presents to children without their superiors' permission
  - Do not disturb religious or cultural ceremonies and do not photograph such occasions without permission
  - Do not walk on graves
- A large group of visitors can easily impact everyday life in small communities, so please be aware of your surroundings. If you are part of such a group, consider how you can contribute to the best possible interaction, for example, by avoiding blocking roads, entrances and exits.
- If at all possible, use toilets for human waste. Please do not leave sanitary items in nature.

Thank you for being a considerate visitor, and we hope you visit again.

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New Community guidelines

— Template for specific communities

COMMUNITY GUIDELINES AECO

Community Specific Guidelines

Photo: Mad d'Hit - Visit Greenland

Guidelines for the development of Community Specific Guidelines

Tourism is growing in the northern hemisphere. As numbers grows in both small and sometimes remote areas that are new to tourism, as well as in more urban communities, there may be a need to pay attention to cultural and social interactions between visitors and locals.

AECO – the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators – promotes best practices among most of the expedition cruise operators who provide tourism to the North Atlantic and High Arctic regions. AECO's objectives are designed to ensure environmentally friendly, safe and considerate tourism. The association and its members strive to set the highest possible operational standards. Included in these objectives are the pledge to ensure value and sustainability in the interaction between the operators and their guest, and with the communities visited.

One of several initiatives taken by AECO is the development of community guidelines for visitors to the North Atlantic and High Arctic regions. This work has been undertaken in cooperation with Visit Greenland, Visit Svalbard, Northern Norway Tourist Board and Cruise Iceland, with financial support from the Nordic Atlantic Cooperation. These guidelines are general and apply in most North Atlantic and High Arctic communities, and will be implemented in the tourism work by all partners, as far as possible.

In addition to the general community guidelines for the vast North Atlantic and High Arctic regions, some communities may find the need to develop community specific guidelines. Community guidelines provide visitors with community-specific information, which can occasionally include special cautions and considerations that visitors should be aware of in that locale.

For operators and guests visiting, it may be beneficial if different community specific guidelines are developed from a common template, making the more easily recognizable from one place to another.

This guideline aims to provide such a template to those communities that wish to develop community specific guidelines. It should not be misunderstood as an unalterable way of developing community specific guidelines, but rather as helpful advice and an inspiration for those who would like to undertake such a project.

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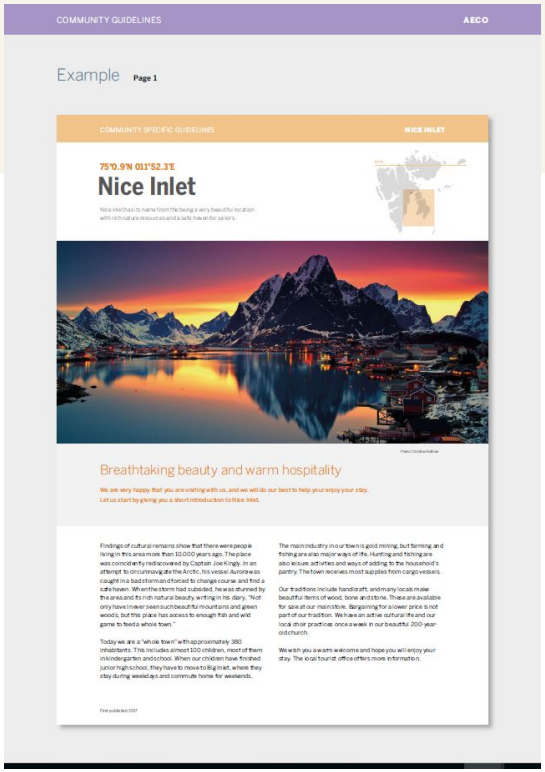


COMMUNITY GUIDELINES AECO

Example Page 1

COMMUNITY SPECIFIC GUIDELINES NICE INLET

75°0.9'N 011°52.3'E

Nice Inlet

Nice Inlet has its name from the being a very beautiful location with rich nature resources and a safe haven for sailors.

Photo: Cecilia Kolbjørn

Breathtaking beauty and warm hospitality

We are very happy that you are visiting with us, and we will do our best to help you enjoy your stay. Let us start by giving you a short introduction to Nice Inlet.

Findings of cultural remains show that there were people living in this area more than 10.000 years ago. The place was coincidently rediscovered by Captain Joe Kingly. In an attempt to circumnavigate the Arctic, his vessel Aurora was caught in a bad storm and forced to change course and find a safe haven. When the storm had subsided, he was stunned by the area and its rich natural beauty, writing in his diary, "Not only have I never seen such beautiful mountains and green woods, but this place has access to enough fish and wild game to feed a whole town."

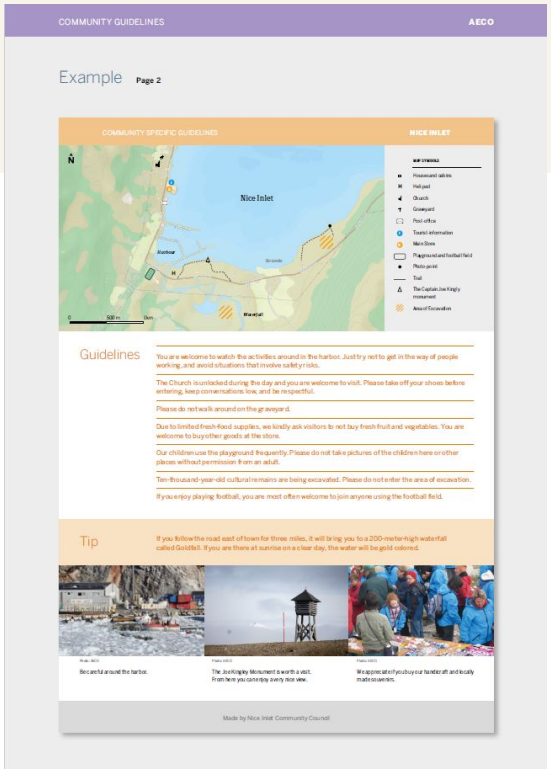
Today we are a "whole town" with approximately 380 inhabitants. This includes almost 100 children, most of them in kindergarten and school. When our children have finished junior high school, they have to move to Bigi Inlet, where they stay during weekdays and commute home for weekends.

The main industry in our town is gold mining, but farming and fishing are also major ways of life. Hunting and fishing are also leisure activities and ways of adding to the household's pantry. The town receives most supplies from cargo vessels.

Our traditions include handicraft, and many locals make beautiful items of wood, bone and stone. These are available for sale at our main store. Bargaining for a lower price is not part of our tradition. We have an active cultural life and our local choir practices once a week in our beautiful 200-year-old church.

We wish you a warm welcome and hope you will enjoy your stay. The local tourist office offers more information.

First published 2017



COMMUNITY GUIDELINES AECO

Example Page 2

COMMUNITY SPECIFIC GUIDELINES NICE INLET

Nice Inlet

Guidelines

You are welcome to watch the activities around in the harbor. Just try not to get in the way of people working, and avoid situations that involve safety risks.

The Church is unlocked during the day and you are welcome to visit. Please take off your shoes before entering, keep conversations low, and be respectful.

Please do not walk around on the graveyard.

Due to limited fresh-food supplies, we kindly ask visitors to not buy fresh fruit and vegetables. You are welcome to buy other goods at the store.

Our children use the playground frequently. Please do not take pictures of the children here or other places without permission from an adult.

Ten-thousand-year-old cultural remains are being excavated. Please do not enter the area of excavation.

If you enjoy playing football, you are most often welcome to join anyone using the football field.

Tip

If you follow the road east of town for three miles, it will bring you to a 200-meter-high waterfall called Goldfall. If you are there at sunrise on a clear day, the water will be gold colored.

Photo: AECO — Be careful around the harbor.

Photo: AECO — The Joe Kingsley Monument is worth a visit. From here you can enjoy a very nice view.

Photo: AECO — We appreciate if you buy our handicraft and locally made souvenirs.

Made by Nice Inlet Community Council

Wildlife guidelines

— Arctic fox, Arctic birds, Reindeer
Seal, Cetacean, Walrus & Bear

Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators AECO

Biosecurity guidelines

— See the PDF version here

BIOSECURITY GUIDELINES AECO

Be a responsible visitor

One of the main ways non-native species can spread to the Arctic is by our activities there. Seeds, micro-organisms, and even insects can hitchhike to the Arctic on footwear, attached to clothing, or in bags that have been used in the outdoors previously. By following a few simple steps, you can ensure that your visit won't lead to non-native species being introduced to the Arctic.

Before leaving home

Examine and clean clothes, footwear, and bags thoroughly
Examine and clean all clothing, including pockets, seams, Velcro fasteners, and footwear soles for dirt and organic material. Use a vacuum cleaner, brushes, and water where necessary to ensure all seeds and dirt have been removed. This is especially important if you have used your clothing and equipment previously in parklands or rural settings, or other polar regions.

Upon arrival

Be biosecurity aware
1. Follow the biosecurity procedures on your expedition. This is especially important if you are moving between distinct geographic regions (e.g. between eastern and western Svalbard, Svalbard and Greenland or Greenland and Canada) but also when moving between distinct landing sites.
2. Watch your step. If you notice organic matter on boots, clothing or gear, make sure to clean it off before leaving a site and use the disinfectant wash between visits. Leave disinfectant to dry between landings.
3. Spread the word. Share this information with others and help protect the Arctic environment.

Non-native species – a potential threat to the Arctic environment

Non-native species represent a threat to biodiversity globally as they can cause serious negative impacts to the natural environment. These are species that are introduced to regions where they are not normally found as a result of human activity. Increasing visitation in the Arctic means a greater chance of more non-native species introductions.

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ASSOCIATION OF ARCTIC EXPEDITION CRUISE OPERATORS AECO

Biosecurity guidelines
for visitors to the Arctic

Help protect the Arctic Environment

The Arctic remains one of the most pristine natural environments in the world. AECO's biosecurity guidelines aim to minimize the risk of future introductions of non-native species to the Arctic.

Non-native species can spread to the Arctic throughout activities there. By following these simple steps in these guidelines you can help prevent this (see opposite page).

If you notice organic matter on boots, clothing or gear, make sure to clean it off.

AECO

Site specific guidelines

More Site Specific guidelines ready in 2017!

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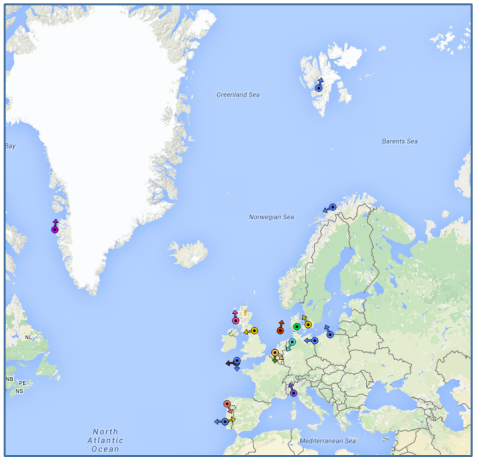
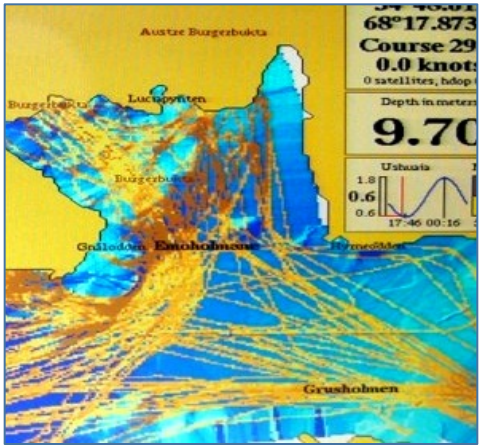
Other industry best practices



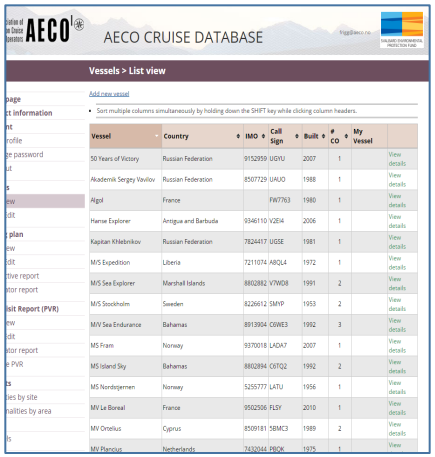
Vessel Tracking

Satellite based tracking of vessels



Crowd Sourcing

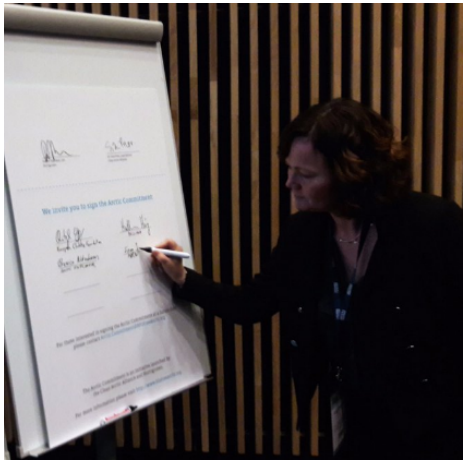
Sharing of depth sounding data



Cruise Database

Coordinated sailing plans, vessel information and statistics

Other industry best practices



Clean up Svalbard

Tons of garbage washed ashore in the Arctic, cleaned by cruise tourists

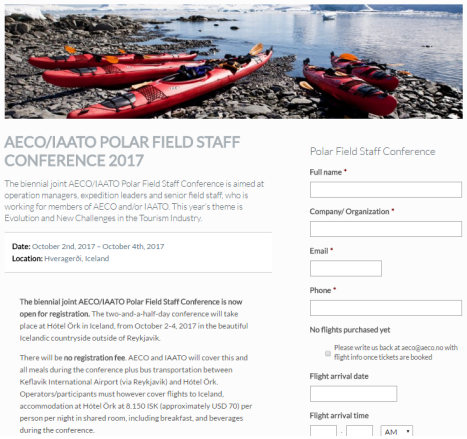
Citizen science

Involving passengers in science projects

Support of HFO ban

AECO supports an international heavy fuel oil ban in the Arctic

Other industry best practices



Joint Public-Private SAR Efforts

Annual Arctic Industry conferences with key participants from the Arctic Sar responders

Joint Industry Training efforts

Biannual Field Staff Conferences initiated by IAATO and AECO

New industry efforts

Off-Vessel Risk Assessment Tool

AECO and partners has received funding for an off-vessel risk assessment tool (O-VRAT) from Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund:

(landings, zodiac-operations, kayaking, diving, plunging, etc)

Field Staff Online Assessment

AECO and partners has received funding for a Field Staff Online Assessment. Currently we have reached approx. 200 questions

Nr	Ilandstigningssted	Dyreliv	Vegetasjon	Kulturminner	Besøk
1	Gravnesodden/Gravneset	64	180	38	7004
2	Alkehornet/Trygghamna	59	320	118	2538
3	Kapp Lee	113	120	34	1651
4	Ny-London (Blomstrandøya)	176	250	135	1571
5	Virgohamn	4	0	174	1279
6	Purchasneset, Lågøya	212	0	112 Δ	1262
7	Eolusneset	20	0	30	1244
8	Gnålodden	102	120	34	1228
9	Smeerenburg (sletta-/odden)	98	200	125	1123
10	Fuglesongen/Alkeura	111 Δ	120		1053
11	Isflakbukta, Phippsøya	106	50	9	735
12	Sallyhavn	24	30	108	540
13	Ahlstrandhalvøya	120	50	196 Δ	517
14	Discobukta (Edgeøya)	27	150	35	462
15	Signehamna	90	0	180 Δ	431
16	Ytre Norskeøya	65	80	147	412
17	Farmhamna	0	10		369
18	Skansebukta hytte	36	30	67	356
19	Skansebukta leir	46	30	16	356
20	Andreneset, Kvitøya	57	0	191 Δ	174
21	Ækongen	218	20	29	151
22	Chermsideøya	18	0	65	133
23	Fuglehuken	41	160		113
24	Ymerbukta	21	0		113
25	Petuniabukta	81	110	47	104
26	Gipsvika	42	10	34	99
27	Likneset	38	0	45	75
28	Augustabukta	17	0	26	66
29	Nordre Russøya	0	0	126 Δ	61
30	Andretangen	182	20	15	52
31	Bjørnhamna	4	80	72	44
32	Crozierpynten/Heklahamna	28	10	74	43
33	Depotoddden	61	30	35	35
34	Brucebyen	102	60	74	19
35	Luney (Tusenøyane)	117	60	50	18
36	Kobbefjorden	24	10	10	6
37	Colesbukta	40	0	6	0
38	Ebeltoftthamna	75	150	101	0

AECO - responsible, environmentally-friendly and safe expedition cruise tourism in the Arctic