

Press release from AECO - Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators and the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) (for immediate release):

Two poles, one mission: Joint AECO/IAATO conference promotes responsible polar tourism

October 1 - 4, more than 90 representatives from the Arctic and Antarctic expedition cruise industry will gather in Iceland for the second AECO/IAATO Polar Field Staff Conference. The topic of the conference is evolution and new challenges in the polar tourism industry.

The three-day conference program includes sessions on growth management, technological developments, safety standards, operational development, citizen science and field staff qualification.

The Polar Field Staff Conference is organized by the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO) and the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operations (IAATO). The conference gathers guides, expedition leaders and operations managers working for AECO and IAATO. The aim of the gathering is to support the two associations' joint mission of advancing safe and environmentally responsible travel in the polar regions.

"It's a chance to discuss the practical issues that staff are facing out in the field, but it's also an opportunity to weigh in on the larger perspective of polar tourism," says Frigg Jørgensen, Executive Director of AECO.

Expected growth

According to Jørgensen, with greater interest in Arctic and Antarctic itineraries, managing growth will be an important topic at this year's conference.

"It is in the industry's interest to ensure sustainable growth. AECO and IAATO are continually developing guidelines and raising standards to promote safe and responsible tourism. Our members have decades of polar field experience, and their expertise is one of our best resources as we prepare for growth," says Jørgensen.

Positive contributions

The conference also highlights how the industry is doing to have a positive impact in the polar regions. One example is the many citizen science initiatives that enable polar visitors and crew to contribute to research projects, such as collecting data for whale identification or sea-ice monitoring.

"Involving visitors in polar research is not only good for science, it also gives them a deeper understanding of the polar regions and the need to protect these unique and globally important areas," says Damon Stanwell-Smith, Executive Director of IAATO.

Photo

Photo caption: "Safety is an important aspect of responsible polar travel. Bringing tourists safely through polar bear country in Svalbard is just another day on the job for an Arctic guide. Photo: Ilja Leo Lang."
Download high resolution image [here](#).

2017 AECO/IAATO Polar Field Staff Conference

The biennial joint AECO/IAATO Polar Field Staff Conference is aimed at operation managers, expedition leaders and senior field staff, who are working for members of AECO and/or IAATO. This year's theme is Evolution and New Challenges in the Tourism Industry. The two-and-a-half-day conference will take place at Hótel Örk in Hveragerði, Iceland, from October 1-4, 2017.

Members of the press are welcome to request press accreditation by contacting Edda Falk, Communications Manager, AECO, at edda@aeco.no / cell: +47 47 63 25 50

Program and list of speakers available here:

<https://www.aeco.no/events/aeco-iaato-field-staff-conference-2017/>

AECO - Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators

Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators is an international organization for expedition cruise operators and associates in the Arctic, dedicated to managing environmentally-friendly, safe and considerate cruise tourism. The close to 70 international members, included 35 vessel operators, owners and management, and 40-45 expedition cruise vessels that are organized by AECO, represent the great majority of these operations in the Arctic.

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International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO)

IAATO is a member organization founded in 1991 to advocate and promote the practice of safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic. IAATO has over 100 members who work together to develop and implement operational standards that mitigate potential environmental impacts. Numerous procedures, guidelines and membership requirements adopted over the last 26 years have proven to be successful methods in avoiding such impacts.

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