

# Site Specific Guidelines



Photo: Troels Jacobsen, AECO

## Guidelines for Developing of Site Specific Guidelines

Site Specific Guidelines is a tool safeguard the environment, cultural remains, and other site qualities, and to manage visitors' behavior within geographically defined area.

As tourism grows in remote areas of the Arctic the need for management of these areas is also increasing to safeguard the natural environment and cultural heritage. Management plans are often covering larger areas whereas possible impact from tourism may be much better defined as specific sites are visited within a given area. The process of completing a site specific guideline and involves several steps with input from end users, professional expertise, and local authorities alike. Developing Site specific guidelines requires funding to cover various cost including conducting vulnerability analysis and site inspections.

In addition to confirming the vulnerability of an area and conveying this information in an easy to understand way, the site specific guidelines can be used to enhance the general knowledge of the area. This should include the history of the place name, the historic context of the site along with any specific historical or archaeological details. Fauna and flora inhabiting the area generate valuable information for guides and naturalists who convey knowledge to their guests. The better information can be conveyed the greater ambassadors to the Arctic are generated among the visitors.

The Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO) is an international association for expedition cruise operators operating in the Arctic and others with interests in this industry. AECO promotes best practices among 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.

## Who to involve

When developing site specific guidelines, different entities need to be involved with different expertise and responsibilities in the process. It is recommended to involve scientific expertise to conduct vulnerability analysis on flora, fauna, historical remains and other natural conditions or qualities that may be found in the area. Other significant stakeholders such as the end users in the tourism industry and local authorities should, whenever possible, be a part of the process

## Associated cost

Site specific guidelines involve several steps in the development phase and will in most cases be associated with costs. This may include involvement of experts both in the preparation phase and in in situ site inspections. Site inspections should preferably take place on more than one occasion should a site be specifically dynamic between seasons. Cost of transportations and accommodations may need to be regarded.

## Work Process

The process that allows a thorough site specific guideline has several steps that can be undertaken. This process will help ascertain all information and establish a fundamental overview of what a site contains before designing the final Site Specific Guideline.

### 1) Deciding on sites needing site specific guidelines

Sites that could benefit from site specific guidelines are often determined by either the presence of cultural remains of importance, areas with particularly sensible flora and/or fauna, or sites where visitation may represent risk of negative impact. Larger area management plans may include sites within the area which correspond to this definition and can be used as reference regarding determining sites of relevance. Tourist visitor statistics can also be helpful.

### 2) Collection of all relevant basic information for the site

All relevant information, including relevant research on the site in question should be collected as the first step in the production phase. The project group should review the data and consider relevance for the guidelines- This preparation should be conducted prior to any field inspections.

### 3) Collection of scientific data on site for vulnerability analysis

The next step should be to conduct an in-person site inspection. It is recommended to include representatives from the scientific community (flora, fauna, archeology), end users such as the tourist industry, and when relevant local authorities and other interest groups.

### 4) Run models to establish vulnerability of the area for flora, fauna, and cultural remains

Scientific modeling of the vulnerability of the site or sub-sites is required in order to establish the details that ensures that the site specific guideline is scientifically sound and that adhering to the guideline will ensure sustainable visitation in the future. The Norwegian Institute for Nature Research (NINA) has designed a detailed procedure for on-site vulnerability assessment and the collection of data. AECO recommends this systematic vulnerability assessment approach when conducting the site inspection.

### 5) Edit and collate all relevant data and add final guideline layout

AECO recommends presenting an all-inclusive, fact based, easy to read but rich in detail guideline.

## Example:

The next two pages feature an example of the final product.



77°33.1'N 014°58.8'E

# Ahlstrandhalvøya

Sør-Spitsbergen National Park – Ahlstrandhalvøya is named after the Swedish librarian, Johan August Ahlstrand (1822-96) who was interested in polar exploration.

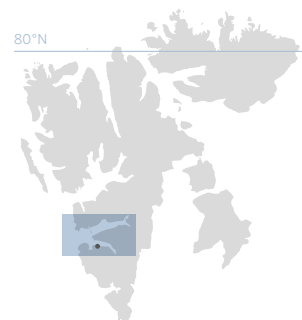


Photo: Ole Magnus Rapp

## When belugas were big business

Large piles of beluga whale bones adorn the beach, the result of hectic and valuable summer-hunting during the interwar years. The beluga blubber as well as the skin was sought after. The beluga whales swam in large groups into the fjords where trappers were waiting with large seine nets to close the mouth of the fjord, trapping and slaughtering the whales.

This slaughtering place is a unique cultural remain in Svalbard.

### VEGETATION

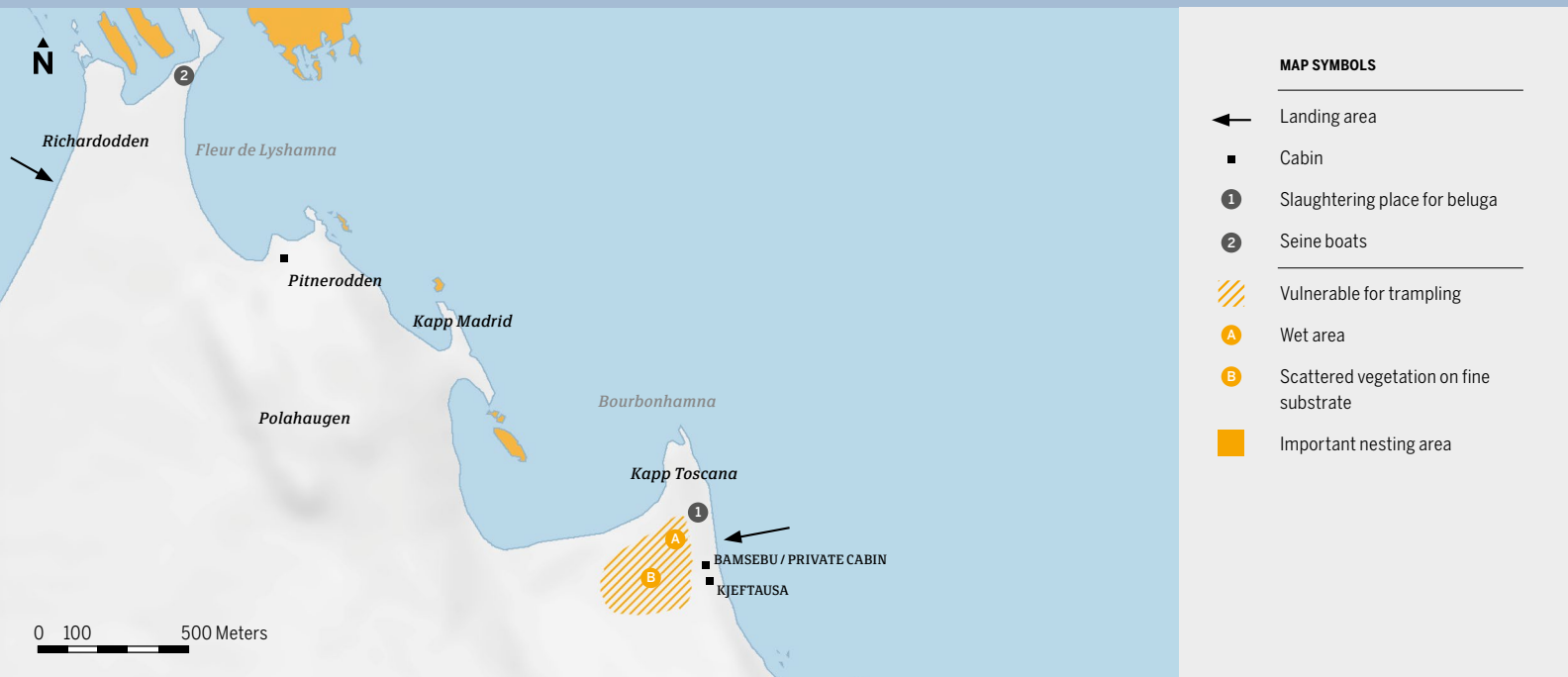
This is one of the most favorable and productive climatic regions for plants at Svalbard. Within the range of a short walk, several of the most typical of Svalbard vegetation types can be observed, including saxifrage heath, wetland, grassland, moss heath, along with exposed ridges of vegetation.

### FAUNA

The birdlife on this peninsula is relatively rich and varied and Ahlstrandhalvøya is an important feeding area for family groups of barnacle geese and female common eider. Several species of waders, including ruddy turnstone, purple sandpiper, sanderling and grey phalarope are also present in the area. Reindeer are commonly seen grazing on the rich vegetation.

### CULTURAL REMAINS

The cabin, Bamsebu, in Ingebrigtsenbukta, was built as a beluga whaling station and is the only excellent example of a beluga whaling station remaining in Svalbard. Next to the cabin is the small storage place, Kjeftausa, where a turned boat forms the roof. Three of the seine boats lie on the beach in Fleur de Lyshamna. The names of the bays, beaches and headlands of Ahlstrandhalvøya originated from the cultural heritage environment connected with the hunting of beluga.



## GUIDELINES

The slaughtering place and the remains of the belugas are protected cultural remains. Please do not touch.

The small patches of wetland next to the cabin Bamsebu have low trampling tolerance, so please walk outside them.

Avoid landings and traffic in areas with large numbers of eiders and geese.

Approach areas with family groups of eiders and geese carefully. Keep the group of visitors together and walk slowly. Disturbance during breeding and moulting season may cause chicks being separated from the adults, making them easy prey for glaucous gull and Arctic fox.

From late May through July avoid traffic on and around the islets off Fleur de Lyshamna as birds are breeding there.

Please respect the private cabin Bamsebu.

## TIP

A four kilometer hike will take you from Ingebrigtsenbukta to Fleur de Lyshamna. If you walk the first part along the beach you will avoid the wet tundra. During the trip you will cross the spectacular tilted folded strata of the Ullaberget series.



Photo: Yan-Ali Tabarnd

The spectacular tilted folded strata are part of the Ullaberget series.



Photo: Trond Haugskott

The charming grey phalarope is relatively common in the area.



Photo: Ole Magnus Rapp

Quite well kept seine boats lie on the beach in Fleur de Lyshamna.