

Tourism in Antarctica: Opportunities and Environmental Concerns



Source: Pixabay (2023)

Background

Being the coldest, highest, driest, and windiest place on Earth, Antarctica is a continent described as a ‘natural reserve, devoted to peace and science’ (British Antarctic Survey, n.d.). For many years, very few people set foot on this ‘cold desert’ except scientists, but now it is slowly becoming a popular destination on many people’s bucket lists.

The surge in travel to Antarctica started well before the pandemic, with close to 44,000 visits in the winter of 2017. That number almost tripled in 2024 following the post-Covid travel boom (CNN, 2024). Scholars attribute the tourism boom in Antarctica to social media, citing a noticeable increase in travellers after videos and related hashtags reached over 200 million views on TikTok (ABC News, 2025). This shows that many people are curious about what it is like to travel in the coldest and most remote continent on Earth.

With growing interest and market demand, many cruise companies and travel agents have begun offering trips to Antarctica over the past decade. Unlike in the past, when scientific expeditions were the main purpose of travel, cruises to the Southern Ocean now cater to a wide range of interests, from wellness tours to even erotic entertainment (SCMP, 2025). At the same time, adventure activities such as skiing, snowboarding, ice walking, snorkeling, and scuba diving are steadily increasing, with peak tourist season aligning with penguin breeding season (Nature India, 2024).

Established in 1991, the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) is an organization promoting safe and environmentally responsible travel in Antarctica (The Umweltbundesamt, 2016). It consists of more than 100 members, representing over 90% of commercial tour operators worldwide (IAATO, n.d.). As part of its mission to govern the carbon footprint left on the sensitive ecosystem by tourism practiced by its members, IAATO

formulates high-standard environmental and safety guidelines, including a maximum of 100 visitors per landing, safety distances from nesting birds, and protection of native fauna and flora (The Umweltbundesamt, 2016).

Challenges

Despite the minimal disturbance to the natural reserve achieved through IAATO's efforts, environmentalists continue to oppose the rising levels of tourist activity in Antarctica. "Antarctica is known to be 'one of the last great wildernesses on Earth,' but we are now seeing a risk of Antarctica becoming an 'adventurous playground' for humans to entertain themselves," says Ricardo Roura, senior adviser at the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC) (SCMP, 2025). Criticisms have also been made towards frivolous behaviour among tourists in Antarctica, such as engaging in dangerous activities and practicing vandalism, with concerns that such behaviour shown on social media reflects just the tip of the iceberg of the actual situation (ABC News, 2025). Furthermore, the increase in cruises has also posed a significant risk to the environment, as gas emissions from these vessels have been found to result in the darkening of snow around landing sites (Yahoo! News, 2025).

Discussion Questions

1. What are the environmental risks associated with increased tourism in Antarctica?
2. How does tourist behavior, including potential vandalism and dangerous activities, impact the perception of Antarctica, and what can be done to promote responsible behavior?
3. How can cruise companies and travel agents be held accountable for their environmental impact in Antarctica, and what incentives could encourage more sustainable practices?
4. What ethical considerations arise from offering entertainment-focused tours in Antarctica?
5. Given the current trends, what do you think the future holds for tourism in Antarctica, and how might it evolve in the coming decades?

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Keywords

- Tourism
- Sustainable tourism
- Natural environment
- Tourist activity
- Responsible travel
- Environmental impact

南极旅游：机遇与环境关怀



Source: Pixabay (2023)

背景

作为地球上最寒冷、最高、最干燥且风力最强的地方，南极洲是一个被描述为“致力于和平与科学的自然保护区”的大陆(British Antarctic Survey, n.d.)。多年来，除了科学家，很少有人踏上这片“寒冷的沙漠”，但如今它正慢慢成为许多人愿望清单上的热门目的地。

前往南极旅行的热潮在大流行之前就已开始，2017 年冬季有近 44,000 人次访问。随着疫情后旅游业的繁荣，这个数字在 2024 年几乎翻了三倍 (CNN, 2024)。学者将南极旅游业的繁荣归因于社交媒体，指出在相关视频和话题标签在 TikTok 上获得超过 2 亿次观看后，旅行者数量显著增加 (ABC News, 2025)。这表明许多人对在地球上最寒冷、最偏远的大陆旅行是什么样子感到好奇。

随着兴趣和市场需求的不断增长，过去十年中许多邮轮公司和旅行社开始提供前往南极的旅行。与过去以科学考察为主要目的不同，现在前往南大洋的邮轮迎合了广泛的兴趣，从健康疗养之旅到甚至情色娱乐 (SCMP, 2025)。同时，滑雪、单板滑雪、冰上行走、浮潜和水肺潜水等探险活动也在稳步增加，旅游旺季与企鹅繁殖季节重合 (Nature India, 2024)。

国际南极旅游组织协会成立于 1991 年，是一个旨在促进南极安全及对环境负责的旅行的组织 (The Umweltbundesamt, 2016)。它由 100 多个成员组成，代表了全球超

过 90% 的商业旅游运营商 (IAATO, n.d.)。作为其管理成员旅游活动对敏感生态系统留下的碳足迹的使命的一部分, IAATO 制定了高标准的环境和安全指南, 包括每次登陆最多 100 名访客、与筑巢鸟类保持安全距离以及保护本地动植物等 (The Umweltbundesamt, 2016)。

挑战

尽管通过 IAATO 的努力已将对自然保护区的干扰降至最低, 但环保人士仍继续反对南极日益增长的旅游活动水平。"南极洲被认为是'地球上最后的大荒野之一', 但我们现在看到南极洲有成为人类自娱自乐的'冒险游乐场'的风险," 南极和南大洋联盟高级顾问 Ricardo Roura 表示 (SCMP, 2025)。针对游客在南极的轻率行为, 如参与危险活动和实施破坏行为, 也提出了批评, 人们担心社交媒体上显示的此类行为只是实际情况的冰山一角 (ABC News, 2025)。此外, 邮轮数量的增加也对环境构成了重大风险, 因为这些船只排放的气体被发现导致登陆点周围的积雪变黑 (Yahoo! News, 2025)。

讨论问题

1. 南极旅游增加带来了哪些环境风险?
2. 包括潜在的破坏行为和危险活动在内的游客行为如何影响人们对南极的看法? 可以采取哪些措施来促进负责任的行为?
3. 应如何要求邮轮公司和旅行社对其在南极的环境影响负责? 哪些激励措施可以鼓励更可持续的做法?
4. 在南极提供以娱乐为重点的旅游会引发哪些伦理考量?
5. 鉴于当前趋势, 您认为南极旅游的未来会如何? 在未来几十年里它可能会如何演变?

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关键词

- 旅游业
- 可持续旅游
- 自然环境
- 旅游活动
- 负责任旅行
- 环境影响

南極旅遊：機遇與環境關懷



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背景

作為地球上最寒冷、最高、最乾燥且風力最強的地方，南極洲是一個被描述為「致力於和平與科學的自然保護區」的大陸 (British Antarctic Survey, n.d.)。多年來，除了科學家，很少有人踏上這片「寒冷的沙漠」，但如今它正慢慢成為許多人願望清單上的熱門目的地。

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隨著興趣和市場需求的增長，過去十年中許多郵輪公司和旅行社開始提供前往南極的旅行。與過去以科學考察為主要目的不同，現在前往南大洋的郵輪迎合了廣泛的興趣，從健康療養之旅到甚至情色娛樂 (SCMP, 2025)。同時，滑雪、單板滑雪、冰上行走、浮潛和水肺潛水等探險活動也在穩步增加，旅遊旺季與企鵝繁殖季節重合 (Nature India, 2024)。

國際南極旅遊組織協會成立於 1991 年，是一個旨在促進南極安全及對環境負責的旅行的組織 (The Umweltbundesamt, 2016)。它由 100 多個成員組成，代表了全球超過 90% 的商業旅遊運營商 (IAATO, n.d.)。作為其管理成員旅遊活動對敏感生態系統留下

的碳足跡的使命的一部分，IAATO 制定了高標準的環境和安全指南，包括每次登陸最多 100 名訪客、與築巢鳥類保持安全距離以及保護本地動植物等 (The Umweltbundesamt, 2016)。

挑戰

儘管透過 IAATO 的努力已將對自然保護區的干擾降至最低，但環保人士仍繼續反對南極日益增長的旅遊活動水平。「南極洲被認為是『地球上最後的大荒野之一』，但我們現在看到南極洲有成為人類自娛自樂的『冒險遊樂場』的風險，」南極和南大洋聯盟高級顧問 Ricardo Roura 表示 (SCMP, 2025)。針對遊客在南極的輕率行為，如參與危險活動和實施破壞行為，也提出了批評，人們擔心社群媒體上顯示的此類行為只是實際情況的冰山一角 (ABC News, 2025)。此外，郵輪數量的增加也對環境構成了重大風險，因為這些船隻排放的氣體被發現導致登陸點周圍的積雪變黑 (Yahoo! News, 2025)。

討論問題

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2. 包括潛在的破壞行為和危險活動在內的遊客行為如何影響人們對南極的看法？可以採取哪些措施來促進負責任的行為？
3. 應如何要求郵輪公司和旅行社對其在南極的環境影響負責？哪些激勵措施可以鼓勵更永續的做法？
4. 在南極提供以娛樂為重點的旅遊會引發哪些倫理考量？
5. 鑑於當前趨勢，您認為南極旅遊的未來會如何？在未來幾十年裡它可能會如何演變？

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關鍵詞

- 旅遊業
- 永續旅遊
- 自然環境
- 旅遊活動
- 負責任旅行
- 環境影響