

SPEAKERS

Association of
Arctic Expedition Cruise
Operators

AECO



2017 AECO/IAATO Polar Field Staff Conference



Susan Adie

EL & Expedition Operations Manager, G Adventures

Susan Adie is a Cornell University graduate and has worked as an Environmental educator / naturalist since 1975. She began working 30 years ago on expedition cruise ships beginning as a lecturer in Alaska, Central America and the Caribbean. Eventually she found her way into the higher and colder latitudes of the Arctic and Antarctic. While lecturing on marine and terrestrial biology and ecology topics she has also been Expedition Leader on over 150 polar expeditions. Susan is now Expedition Operations Manager for G Adventures, responsible for all programming on the G Expedition.



Steinar Aksnes

Assistant Expedition Leader

Steinar grew up in the mountains of Norway close to Bergen and moved to Svalbard in 1996. He worked within tourism on different ships in the summer and snowmobile in the winter seasons for the first 9 years. After that he moved on to work for the film industry, and mainly within natural history film making. He did field work for films like, BBC "Natures Great Events", BBC Frozen Planet, BBC Life, HC "Life after people", IMAX "to the Arctic". After this he had a five year period where he worked for The Norwegian Polar Institute as a logistical engineer, helping scientist with their fieldwork.



Ted Cheeseman

Graduate student, Scripps Institution of Oceanography

Ted grew up in California, USA, whale watching and getting seasick in Monterey Bay from the age of a toddler. He was fortunate to be born into a wildlife expedition tour company, studied tropical conservation biology at Duke University, then was seduced by the glory of polar extremes, now as owner and expedition leader for Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris. Ted has been deeply involved Antarctic tourism management, and has increasingly focused on using citizen science to create understanding of whales and the marine environment with the whale identification and tracking website www.Happywhale.com.



Alex Cowan

Polar EL and geologist

Alex originally trained as a geologist, working on problems ranging from volcanic processes to CO2 sequestration and solution mining. With a background in yachting and mountaineering, he quickly transitioned away from academia to expedition cruising, and today is part of a small group of expedition staff who are hoping to help unlock the unique scope of the expedition cruising fleet to make it a bigger and more important part of the polar research community.



Nicolas Dubreuil

Expedition leader, Ponant

Nicolas Dubreuil was born in the Parisian suburb of Asnières. He was 18 when he discovered the Polar Regions in 1987. Since, he has been traveling in the Arctic and Antarctica most of the year. Whether it be on foot, sled, ski or kayak, he has been in Alaska, Spitsbergen, Southern Georgia and Greenland, and has guided expeditions for sportsmen, scientists, film crews, expedition cruises and handicapped people. Saved by a Greenlandic from a fall in the freezing waters, he has made his motto: «Time and ice are our only masters».



Jón Ingi Einarsson
Managing Director, Ekran / Flavor of Iceland



Anja Ulla Erdmann
Expedition Leader and Expedition Operating Manager, Poseidon Expeditions
Anja studied "Tourism Management" in her native Germany. Greenland is Anja's first polar love! In the year 2000 and as part of an internship, she worked and lived in the Disko Bay area. Since then, she has returned to the north and south every year as a tour guide first, but quickly as Expedition Leader. Anja loves challenges and exploring new areas.



Edda Falk
Communications Manager, Association of Arctic Expedition Operators
Edda is Norwegian and her background includes language studies, international relations and communications, specializing in Arctic issues. She has previously worked for the Norwegian Embassy in Havana, Canadian Embassy in Norway and as an Arctic Advocacy Officer for the Canadian International Arctic Centre in Oslo, where she coordinated the promotion of Canada's Arctic interests abroad. She has also held the position of Communications Adviser at the High North Center for Business and Governance in Bodø, which focuses on business and innovation in the circumpolar Arctic.



Guðrún Þóra Gunnarsdóttir
Director of the Icelandic Tourism Research Centre
Guðrún Þóra is director of the Icelandic Tourism Research Centre located in Akureyri, Iceland. She holds a M.B.A. degree in Tourism Management from the University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada and a MA degree in Comparative literature from the University of Oregon, USA. Guðrún Þóra has more than two decades of experience in teaching and researching tourism. She led the development of the Department of Rural Tourism at Holar University College that was established 1996 and was the head of the department from its inception until 2009 and then an associate professor until 2016. Her research interests have focused on tourism in rural areas and destination development.



Tore Magne Hoem
Adventures Director, Hurtigruten Svalbard
Tore moved to Svalbard in 1998 to study at the University Centre in Svalbard (UNIS), and in 2002 completed his Masters degree in marine biology. Tore's first visit to Svalbard was in 1996, and since then he has used a large part of his free time exploring the island and has become very familiar with the area, both on land and along Spitsbergen's long coastline. He has been involved with pretty much every product Hurtigruten Svalbard offers, with a focus on expedition cruises and snowmobile expeditions. He became an authorised Svalbard guide in 2001. Today Tore is employed as adventures director in Hurtigruten Svalbard.



Cilia Holmes Indahl
Director Sustainability, Aker BioMarine
Indahl is responsible for Aker BioMarine sustainability strategy and their efforts to improve human and planetary health. Her work aims to ensure that the fishery is managed sustainably and includes research on the Antarctic ecosystem to ensure the biodiversity in the area. Indahl holds a double masters degree in international business and sustainable development from the Norwegian School of Economics (NHH) and HEC Paris. Prior to joining Aker BioMarine, she worked at the United Nations with the sustainable development goals(SDGs).



Frigg Jørgensen

Executive Director, Association of Arctic Cruise Operators

Frigg joined AECO in 2006, initially as General Secretary, a position that later was changed to Executive Director. Frigg comes from northern Norway but has been living in Svalbard and working in polar tourism since 1992. After completing a college degree in tourism, she started as manager for Svalbard Tourism, building up the local tourist office in Longyearbyen and coordinating the establishment of Svalbard Tourism Board. From 2001 till 2006 she worked as the first Tourism Adviser at the Governor of Svalbard. Frigg has been project manager for development of "The Svalbard Guide Courses", "General guidelines for tourism in Svalbard", "Clean up Svalbard" and "The Governor's strategy for tourism and outdoor recreation". Since she joined AECO she has been responsible for a number of AECO-projects such as developing "AECO's site specific guidelines", developing "AECO's cruise database", "Measuring environmental impact of cruise traffic" and developing "Animated guidelines for visitors to the Arctic".



Lisa Kelley

Head of Operations, International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators

Lisa was born and raised in Buffalo, NY, and 17 years ago she ran away to sea, never looking back. For 17 years, 8-10 months of her year was spent in the Polar Regions: the boreal summer in the Arctic and the Austral Summer in the Antarctic working as an Underwater Photo/Videographer and Expedition Leader. Lisa learned to dive in the Antarctic and wrote a dive/natural history guide about the amazing Underwater World of the Antarctic. Her love of the Polar Regions extends outside of just the expedition world, serving as Station Manager at the USAPs Palmer Station, and sits on the boards of two conservation efforts: Friends of South Georgia Island and Meet the Ocean. Lisa made the move to Head of Operations of IAATO in September 2016, where she hopes to be part of the bigger picture of conserving Antarctica for all to enjoy for years to come.



Erna Kristjándóttir

Marketing & Quality Manager – Faxaflóahafnir sf. / Vice Chairman – Cruise Iceland

Erna was born in Reykjavík. She holds a Master degree in Project Management (MPM), a Bachelor degree in Education (B.ED) and a Íata Uftaa Travel & tourism diploma. She is also a certified Scrum Master and auditor. Erna has worked for Air Atlanta Icelandic for 4 years (Technical department), the pharmaceutical company Actavis, now Teva (Global Quality Department), for 8 years and now for almost two years at Faxaflóahafnir sf. (Marketing & Quality Manager) & Cruise Iceland (Vice Chairman).



Allison Lee

Graduate student at Scripps Institution of Oceanography

Allison has spent seven years studying phytoplankton's response to climate change and is dedicated to connecting her research with a broader public audience. As an incoming Ph.D. student studying polar oceanography, she is developing FjordPhyto, a citizen science project engaging the tourism community in current climate change research. Allison once ran a marathon on the Ross Ice Shelf, Antarctica, dressed as a banana, the same day she boarded the Nathaniel B Palmer icebreaker for a two-month research expedition at sea.



Amanda Lynnes

Head of Communications & Engagement, International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators

Amanda's focus is on IAATO's internal and external communications and its reputation, which is built upon a strong legacy of safe, environmentally responsible Antarctic travel. She used to work for the British Antarctic Survey, the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). Her first introduction to polar tourism was a season at Port Lockroy. This was a bit of a culture shock after years researching penguins on the South Orkney Islands, but she was so impressed by the ethics of the IAATO operators and their field staff that she joined IAATO as an ornithologist for a member company and is now proud to be on the Secretariat. She has forgotten a lot about birds, but does remember sharing folk's joy at seeing their first penguin or ice-berg. She's therefore excited about IAATO's Antarctic Ambassador concept, believing passionately that responsible tourism is a force for good in protecting our polar regions for future generations.



Inga Dóra Gudmundsdottir Markussen

Secretary General, West Nordic Council

Inga Dóra Markussen is the Secretary General of the West Nordic Council, a parliamentary cooperation between Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands. She formerly worked as a journalist, editor in chief and board member of Mediahouse Sermitsiaq.AG. She also has extensive experience in public relations and corporate and strategic communications.



Rob McCallum

Founder, EYOS Expeditions Ltd, Expedition Voyage Consultants Ltd.

A Seattle based New Zealander, Rob McCallum has a long career in planning, managing and leading technical expeditions for Government, non-Government, commercial and private expeditions. His expeditions have included a wide variety of challenging expeditions in the abyssal depths of the Marianas Trench, deep field polar landscapes and the remotest parts of the tropics. For the last decade, he has been an active partner in EYOS, EVC and High Latitudes as the foremost provider of expedition services to the superyacht industry. In recent years, he has been part of the core design team for the SeaXplorer range of expedition yachts. He sits on the Executive Committee of IAATO.



Alex McNeal

Expedition Leader, Quark Expeditions

Over the past decade, Alex has completed over 100 polar expeditions as a guide, lecturer, and expedition leader. His passion for the North has led him to all corners of the circumpolar Arctic. He has completed multiple seasons in the Russian Arctic, Greenland, Svalbard, and the Canadian High and Low Arctic including over ten expeditions to the geographic North Pole. After 16 field seasons Alex's role at Quark Expeditions has expanded to include assisting with Russian business development and working with relevant government authorities and local contacts through the complex process of permit acquisition.



Roy Pedersen

Master Mariner at Hurtigruten ASA

Roy is from and resides in Tromsø and has been working at sea since he was 15 years old, first on a fishing vessel, later on oil tankers and cruise vessels. Roy has operated in the area around the Arctic, Greenland and Antarctica. His first trip to Svalbard was in 1983, and it remains his favorite place. Roy has a strong passion to work with safety, and reducing the risk for accidents. He has sailed as captain for many years in Hurtigruten and currently works as a leader in Hurtigruten's Safety department.



Lars Maltha Rasmussen

Albatros Travel

An experienced naturalist and field biologist Lars' Arctic career started in 2007 where he moved to live in Greenland. For 5 years, he worked as a scientist at the Greenland Institute for Natural Resources involved in environmental assessments and baseline studies, ship and aerial sea bird and marine mammal surveys and counts of caribou on snow mobiles. Based in Greenland he started working as an expedition guide for several different expedition cruise companies, both in the Arctic, Pacific, Subantarctic and Tropic regions. Since 2015 he has mainly been employed by Albatros Expeditions as an Expedition Guide, Expedition Leader and Field Staff Manager.



Claudia Roedel

Expedition Team Leader

Claudia is a professional expedition leader and guide with over 25 years' experience in Antarctica, the Amazon, Costa Rica, Panama, Venezuela, the Guianas, Southeast Asia and Australia. She has a degree in biology from the University of São Paulo and field research training in tropical ecology from INPA. Since 1992 she has guided Antarctic expeditions, where she has found the perfect opportunity to integrate her interests in ecology, history, and art.



Damon Stanwell-Smith

Executive Director, International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators

Damon leads the IAATO Secretariat and works with an Executive Committee to ensure IAATO is functioning according to its mission of safe, environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic and Southern Ocean. Prior to joining IAATO, Damon was the Head of Marine Environment at UK arm of the Danish international consultancy NIRAS; previously Head of the Marine Programme at the UN Environment World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) and before that the research manager of an International NGO (The Society for Environmental Exploration) coordinating biodiversity research expeditions in East Africa and SE Asia 1998-2002. He began his career as a marine biologist, gaining a PhD in benthic invertebrate ecology with the British Antarctic Survey whilst wintering at Signy base in the South Orkneys 1992-1995. Damon has extensive practical experience as a commercial diver and diving contractor, logging c.2400 scientific work dives in UK, East Africa, USA and Southern Ocean including over 500 under-ice. He has also worked on IAATO expedition vessels on numerous voyages during 2003-08, mostly as an EL on MV Polar Star.



Brent Stephenson

Expedition Leader, Lindblad-National Geographic

Brent grew up and was educated in New Zealand, but now lives in Buffalo, NY. He studied zoology and ecology through to PhD level at Massey University in New Zealand, but before finishing his PhD had started a bird guiding company that specializes in New Zealand birding tours - Wrybill Birding Tours, NZ. 12 years ago, Brent worked his first contract on an expedition ship (Clipper Odyssey with Clipper Cruises), and has worked 6-7 months per year ever since, for a number of Operators. He now works for Lindblad - National Geographic Expeditions and Zegrahm Expeditions, as general naturalist/birder/photographer/Expedition Leader, in the Polar regions, as well as the tropics, while still running birding tours in New Zealand.



Karin Strand

Field Operation & Expedition Teams Manager, Hurtigruten

Karin grew up among the Norwegian fjords and glaciers. With a law education, she took a clear career change, and went to sea. She joined Hurtigruten MS Nordnorge's first adventures to Chile & Antarctica in 2002, and has been a part of the Explorer Product ever since, as Expedition leader and now Operations Manager where new challenges awaits.



Ida Lund Winther

Acting Office Manager Denmark, Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators

Ida is Greenlandic, and has worked in tourism for over 15 years. She was Managing Director of Hurtigruten Greenland, and Sales and Marketing Manager for Hurtigruten Explorer in Denmark. She has also held the position of Activity Manager of Lalandia, Rødby, where she was responsible for the daily operations of 4 business units. She was Project Manager at Business Lolland-Falster, where here worked on development projects on local, regional and cross boarder cooperations. Before joining the AECO Secretariat, she was Development Manager for the regional tourism board VisitSydsjælland-Møn. Ida holds a Bachelor degree in tourism, a Master of Business Administration from Henley Business School, as well as a Master in Professional Communication for Roskilde University Center. She is fluent in Greenlandic, Danish, English and German.



Boris Wise

Expedition Leader and Naturalist

Boris is a passionate wilderness guide and an accomplished photographer. He worked as a hiking and rafting guide in South East Alaska for 10 years. As an Expedition Leader, Boris has numerous trips to Antarctica, South Georgia and the Falklands under his belt.



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About the 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 working for members of AECO and/or IAATO.

Learn more:

www.aeco.no - www.iaato.org

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