

Arctic Yacht Guidelines

Guidelines for private yachts sailing in the Arctic



Photo: Aztec Lady

The Arctic is characterized by vast wilderness areas and a diversity of people, cultures and communities. Eight different countries have sovereignty across the Arctic and different national legislations applies for travel and tourism.

The Arctic has some of the best preserved wilderness in the world and large parts are protected. When planning a trip to the Arctic, it is important you are a considerate visitor and take special care to minimize your impact. It is also important you are vigilant to the considerable safety risks in the area and have respect for the communities you visit and the people you meet.

When sailing in the Arctic, it is especially important to consider the long distances, harsh conditions, lack of infrastructure and the need to be self-sufficient.

These guidelines have been developed to assist you in being a considerate visitor while staying safe.

Basic Principles

- Leave no lasting signs of your visit.
- Do not pick flowers.
- Do not take anything with you.
- Do not disturb animals and birds.
- Leave cultural remains alone.
- Take the polar bear danger seriously.
- Respect local cultures and local people.
- Be safe.



Photo: Ole Magnus

Be aware that the Polar Code regulates sailing in the Arctic.

www.imo.org

Planning and preparation

- Develop an overall plan considering all aspects of the voyage.
- Acquire an operational knowledge of relevant laws and regulations for all planned activities.
- Seek advice in Arctic operations including navigation, weather conditions, sea ice, glaciers, wildlife and other relevant areas.
- Remote areas may require special or additional communications equipment.
- Include consideration for the environment, safety and local communities in the planning process.
- Communicate with the relevant authorities. Send advance notification of your travel plans and permit applications as required. Be aware of deadlines.
- Designate a responsible point of contact on shore and share your plans with them, both for regular operations and for emergency situations.
- Keep in mind that locally available supplies may be limited, including bunker and provisions.
- Plan for your garbage handling. Local reception facilities may be limited.
- Authorities may require post-visit reports on activities and incidents.

Safety

- Plan and be prepared for self-sufficiency.
- Weather can change very quickly, and you should be prepared for extreme conditions. Be aware of the windchill factor.
- Air and sea temperatures are very low, and chances of survival are very limited without exposure protection, e.g. full body immersion suits.
- The high latitudes and remote areas may have limited or no means of radio, cellular and satellite communications.
- Be prepared and equipped for extended, forced stays ashore.
- Detailed charts are not available for all parts of the Arctic.
- Compass readings may not be reliable in high Arctic areas.
- Use of tracking systems (AIS or others) and portable Iridium phone are highly recommended.
- Be trained, prepared and equipped for encounters with polar bears anywhere and at any time.

Photo: Iija Lang



Photo: Kristin Prestvold



Photo: Olivier Pitras





Photo: Eynos Expeditions

Environment

- Assess the area, its characteristics and vulnerabilities before conducting any activities.
- Ensure non-disturbance and safe distances to wildlife.
- Avoid disturbing wildlife with noise. Keep radio volume low and conversation quiet and calm.
- Minimize the risk of importing invasive alien species and spreading diseases by following appropriate biosecurity protocols.
- Avoid walking on muddy or wet terrain and on vulnerable vegetation.
- Use prepared or marked paths if they are already established.
- Do not remove anything. This includes, but is not limited to, animal remains, rocks, plants and human artefacts.
- Cultural remains are generally protected. Do not touch, relocate or remove them from their original location.
- Do not build cairns, make graffiti of any kind or leave any other signs of your visit.
- Rabies has been detected in Arctic regions and is potentially fatal to humans. Do not touch any animals or their remains.
- The use of drones is regulated. Inform yourself about local regulations and consider the impact drones have on wildlife and other visitors.

People and Community

- When visiting the Arctic, do not expect to find everything as it is at home.
- When visiting local communities, please remember that you are a guest.
- Respect people and local cultures. Talk with and not about people you meet.
- Ask before you photograph – a hesitation means NO.
- Respect privacy; keep a good distance from private houses and cabins. Never glance or photograph through private windows.
- Do not visit graveyards or other areas of religious or cultural significance without permission.
- Be aware that there are sites in the Arctic that hold cultural importance to locals. Seek information and respect the advice and wishes of local communities.
- Cairns may be signposts – do not alter them.
- Never barter or import banned substances to a community.
- You are encouraged to buy local souvenirs and products but be aware of the legalities of importing and transporting purchases.
- Respect other visitors. Ensure courteous communication with other vessels and visitors.
- Never approach or attempt to pet or feed Arctic dogs without permission and supervision from the dog owner or handler.

Sailing to Svalbard

Although Svalbard may appear easily accessible, it is important to remember it is located in the high Arctic. Therefore, sailing to Svalbard requires careful planning and consideration for safety, environment, people and communities. Below, you will find additional information to assist you in planning your trip.

Governor of Svalbard

The Governor of Svalbard (Sysselmannen) is the highest authority in Svalbard, including Bjørnøya. On the Sysselmannen website, you will find information about planning a trip and mandatory notification of travel plans, laws and regulations, area restrictions and other resources. A passport is mandatory for non-Norwegians. Visas may be required.

www.sysselmannen.no

+47 790 24 300

Port of Longyear (Longyearbyen harbor)

Longyearbyen is the administrative center in Svalbard. Here you will find the Governor of Svalbard's office, port services, fuel, provisions, medical assistance and more. Port fee and services can be paid using the mobile application GoMarina.

www.portlongyear.no

+47 790 22 150

Visit Svalbard

The local tourist office, Visit Svalbard, provides information about Svalbard, things to do, food and drink, where to stay, travel advice, safety and much more.

www.visitsvalbard.com

For further information on weather, ice and tide, navigation, maps, safety, search and rescue (SAR), resources and tools, please visit AECO's dedicated webpage.

www.aeco.no/yacht-guidelines

The Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO) is an international organization for cruise operators. AECO's main objective is to ensure that tourism in the Arctic is carried out with the utmost consideration for the fragile, natural environment, local cultures and cultural remains, while ensuring safe operations at sea and on land. These guidelines were prepared by AECO and reviewed by the Governor of Svalbard, with funding from the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund.

Photo: Aztec Lady



Photo: Paul Guilfoyle



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