

Antarctica and tourism



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Antarctica and Tourism.

On a holiday, people expect to see beaches, enjoy the sun, searching for challenge, education and excitement, including relaxation. Antarctica being exactly the opposite of a fantasy holiday destination, has still managed to capture the attention of tourist. The world's extreme conditions aren't usually spots for tourist attraction. Antarctica, with extreme physical conditions is incredibly amazing tourist destination. The polar region being covered with snow, unique wildlife, huge mountains, valleys, ice bergs etc are the factors for the increase in the number of people visiting the Antarctica. The number of tourists to Antarctica has increased quite considerably, during the past decade, according to International Association of Antarctica tour operators (IAATO) in 2002/2003, 13571 tourists visited Antarctica compared to 6000, a decade ago. Antarctica is completely different to any other holiday destination in the world. With no malls, no shopping complexes, no restaurants, no bar's. All it has to offer is its amazing scenic beauty and its unique wildlife.

The only activity that uses Antarctica commercially is Tourism, mainly concentrated to Antarctic Peninsula and to a lesser extent the Ross Sea. During the year 1950 tourists began entering Antarctica via means of air and ship; and helicopter trips, commercial flights started flying to Antarctica only in the year 1960. Between 1977 to around about 1980, there were regular flights that flew to Antarctica, which carried about 11, 000 tourists (Bauer, 2001). Flying over Antarctica atmosphere was a major concern, due to lack of radio signals, meteorological services and emergency services. On November 28th, 1979, 257 people were killed, when an Air Zealand flight

struck Mt Erebus, due to poor visibility (Bauer, 2001). Which restricted flights to Antarctica for a few years, were people were skeptical of flying over to Antarctica, but in the year 1994 overflights were resumed, by an Australian airline company.

The first expedition to Antarctica was an Argentinean vessel, the *Les Ecaireurs* that carried 100 passengers to the peninsula. In the year 1968, 24 people visited the Ross dependency. Since then on ships have become regular, originating mainly from Chile and Argentina, operating mainly around the Ross sea area, landings for these ships are made in small inflatable rubber boat known as zodiacs at several locations, for example Cape Adare, Scott Base, McMurdo Terra Nova Bay Stations and Possession Island, etc(Bauer, 2001). Helicopters are used to make trips to the Taylor valley in the McMurdo Dry Valleys. Due to no land-based services for tourism, Most of tourism in and around Antarctica, takes place through ships. In 1993/94 the ship *Marco Polo* carrying four hundred tourists circumnavigated the continent in a record time of twenty-two days. the tour visited places like Cape Adare, Cape Evans and McMurdo Station, huts were spotted which showed evidence of huts left by the early explorers. These tours offered instructive knowledge about the environment. As Hart states, this area is more for those who seek an informative vacation rather than relaxation and constant comfort

Tourism has far less benefits compared to the risks it can cause the Antarctic environment. Tourist's visiting Antarctica have some guidelines that need to be followed in order to preserve the environment and its fragility. The carbon released from the flights and wastes from the ship could, give rise to the

<https://assignbuster.com/antarctica-and-tourism/>

green house effect, causing global impacts, for example due to the rise of carbon dioxide in the air lakes on the Signy island, in maritime Antarctica have increased their temperature by 0.9 degrees Celsius, which could contribute to the loss of ice on the continent, bringing about its decline, global impacts can also have direct impacts on the flora and fauna of Antarctica. But much more than the damage caused by these gases, is the damage caused by men on the land. Most of Antarctica's terrestrial life is composed of low lying mosses, lichen etc. Mass tourists can exploit the region, the damage of a single footprint can destroy these species, which probably will never recover again (Hart, 1988). Until late 1960's sealing and whaling had become a problem, where penguins, seals and whales, were killed for their oil, skin and blubber, this is now not much of a problem, since there has been a treaty of agreement against these actions. Most of the damage caused, is due to waste disposal caused mainly by the smaller tour ships, accidents have occurred where these small ships have been grounded on uncharted rocks, causing oil spills.

Therefore increasing the number of tourists will increase the number of ships, thereby increasing oil spillage, oil doesn't mix with water, causing a rise of two different fluids, this fluid mechanics is much more complex than just oil and water, causing great danger to the animal life of the continent. Disposal of organic matter by visiting tourists is another threat, for example a plastic bag, disposed, can take years to decay, and could entangle animals, resulting in their death. Tourism in Antarctica is guided and regulated by the International Association of Antarctic tour Operators (IAATO). They set strict guidelines to its members, for example limiting the size of ships that can

actually sail Antarctica. Unlike other tourist attractions, Antarctica lacks local inhabitants, mainly people at the science stations that take the advantage and the benefits of tourism. Tourists are considered environmental hazards

Antarctica is one of the world's greatest natural assets, which has been a growing location for tourists. But some set guidelines need to be followed to preserve this continent from declining. Studies indicate that, tourists touring the continent could cause detrimental and physical damage to the continent. Research and studies have shown that Airborne and Seaborne tourists might have low levels of disturbance compared to those on the land. To save Antarctica from these tourism effects, an international convention relating only to tourism and its harmful effects, must be conducted.

References:

Hart P. D., 1988, The Growth of Antarctic Tourism, Oceanus, summer edition.

Bauer, T. G. 2001. Tourism in the Antarctic: Opportunities, constraints and future prospects. The Haworth Press, New York, USA.

Hall, C. M and Johnston, M. E. (eds). 1995. Polar Tourism: Tourism in the Arctic and Antarctic Regions. John Wiley & Sons Ltd. West Sussex, England.

International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators website, www.iaato.org

Parker, B. C. (ed.), 1972, Conservation Problems in Antarctica. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia.

Campbell, I. B. and Claridge, G. G. C., 1989, Antarctica: soils, weathering processes and environment. Elsevier, Amsterdam, 368 p