Report on Antarctic tourist flows and cruise ships operating in Ushuaia during the 2021/2022 Austral summer season

English version provided by the author

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**Information Paper presented by Argentina**

***Summary***

This paper provides information about the flows of passengers and vessels that visited Antarctica during the 2021/2022 Austral summer season, operating from the port of Ushuaia. The number of voyages that took place, passengers and their nationalities, average number of crew per vessel, and the registers of ships, are included as well.

***Introduction***

Ushuaia (54º 48’ S - 68º 19’ W), located at the southern tip of South America, is the most active gateway city to Antarctica in terms of Antarctic ship-borne tourism since mid-1990´s, concentrating approximately 90% of the ship-borne Antarctic tourist activity worldwide.

The development of airport and port infrastructure in Ushuaia has contributed to facilitate Antarctic cruise ships operations through the port of Ushuaia. In addition to the short distance between Ushuaia and the Antarctic Peninsula, those works allowed tour operators to extend the frequency of their Antarctic operations during the tourist season.

Regarding Antarctic ship-borne tourism that operates from the port of Ushuaia, we can make a clear distinction between different types of vessels, according to their activities in the Antarctic Peninsula area. On the one hand, vessels that make landings at different locations; on the other hand, vessels of a much larger size which only sail Antarctic waters without enabling landings. Moreover, a further distinction can be made when looking into the services vessels require from the port of Ushuaia: those vessels that arrive in Ushuaia as part of a more extended South American and Antarctic itinerary, and those which call in Ushuaia’s port as their summer base of operations. Generally, in the latter case, operations carried out in Ushuaia involve passenger changeover, using the city’s airport, port and maritime services, as well as the general supply of provisions and tourist services. Finally, it should be noted that at the beginning and at the end of the Antarctic tourist season, most vessels arrive to and/or depart from the port of Ushuaia, and engage in positioning voyages from or towards other destinations.

However, given the situation caused by COVID-19, during the season of analysis for this report (2021-2022), only voyages carried out by vessels that made landings in Antarctica took place. These vessels used the port of Ushuaia as a base port for their operations. Large ships did not make trips this season.

In order to present the status of tourist flows of visitors and vessels that, through Ushuaia’s port, visited Antarctica in the 2021/2022 season, data was collected from the ship’s dispatches[[1]](#footnote-1) provided to “Prefectura Naval Argentina” (Argentine Coast Guard), the national competent authority to that effect. In some cases, this information was compared to the itineraries provided by tour operators on their websites, and to data obtained from alternate sources. Such information is used to prepare a database for each Antarctic tourist season.

This document updates the data provided in similar papers presented by Argentina to the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings since 2009, providing information that may contribute to discussions related to Antarctic tourism.

***Brief review of the Antarctic tourist flows and cruise ships that operated via Ushuaia during the 2021/2022 Austral summer season***

The 2021/2022 tourist season started on November 9th when the vessel *National Geographic Endurance* (Lindblad Expeditions) set sail for Antarctica, and finished on March 28th with the arrival of the vessel *Ocean Victory* (Albatros Expeditions) to the port of Ushuaia. There were a total of 135 voyages run by 23 vessels, including the *SV Bark Europa[[2]](#footnote-2).* December was the busiest month regarding the number of Antarctic voyages, followed by January (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1 - Number of Antarctic voyages through the port of Ushuaia per month.**

**Ushuaia, 2021/2022 summer season**

Gráfico, Gráfico de barras

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*Source: Universidad Nacional de Tierra del Fuego, Antártida e Islas del Atlántico Sur (UNTDF), based on data collected from 2021/2022 ship’s dispatches, Argentine Coast Guard.*

During the 2021/2022 season, 17,265 visitors went to Antarctica, using Ushuaia as a connection port from and/or to the Antarctic territory. As noted in the introduction to this report, all visitors counted here correspond to vessels that have embarked and/or disembarked passengers in Ushuaia on their itinerary to or from Antarctica, using the local port as a base port for their operations. These ships transported less than 500 passengers, thus being able to make landings based on the provisions of Measure 15 (2009). It should be noted that during the 2021/2022 season, no large ship voyages carrying more than 500 passengers took place.

The average number of crew members and passengers[[3]](#footnote-3), as well as the number of voyages per vessel are presented in Table 1. Figure 2 shows passenger averages per vessel.

Furthermore, 7 vessels ran regular voyages to and from Antarctica operating throughout the season from Ushuaia, and they account for 30,43 % of the total number of vessels that were counted. Each of these vessels made more than 7 voyages to Antarctica, as indicated in Figure 3.

**Table 1 - Average number of crew and passengers per vessel and number of voyages.**

**Ushuaia, 2021/2022 summer season**

| **VESSEL** | **AVERAGE CREW PER VOYAGE** | **AVERAGE PASSENGERS PER VOYAGE** | **NUMBER OF VOYAGES** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|
|
| *Bark Europa*(a) | 45 | 0 | 4 |
| *Corinthian* | 68 | 63 | 1 |
| *Crystal Endeavour* | 204 | 124 | 6 |
| *Hamburg* | 153 | 209 | 4 |
| *Hanseatic Inspiration* | 159 | 145 | 4 |
| *Hanseatic Nature* | 163 | 136 | 4 |
| *Hondius* | 69 | 143 | 4 |
| *L´Austral* | 145 | 130 | 8 |
| *Le Boreal* | 141 | 148 | 7 |
| *Le Lyrial* | 140 | 142 | 7 |
| *National Geographic Endurance* | 94 | 98 | 6 |
| *National Geographic Explorer* | 86 | 106 | 10 |
| *National Geographic Resolution* | 95 | 98 | 9 |
| *Ocean Explorer* | 82 | 117 | 4 |
| *Ocean Victory* | 81 | 176 | 11 |
| *Plancius* | 39 | 101 | 3 |
| *Scenic Eclipse* | 186 | 122 | 6 |
| *Sea Spirit* | 82 | 100 | 6 |
| *SH Minerva* | 121 | 103 | 6 |
| *Seaventure* | 86 | 102 | 6 |
| *Ultramarine* | 144 | 133 | 1 |
| *Viking Octantis* | 266 | 237 | 6 |
| *World Navigator* | 140 | 126 | 12 |

Note: (a) the *SV Bark Europa* is considered a training vessel, declaring it takes only trainees on board, who were included on the crew list.

*Source: UNTDF, based on data collected from 2021/2022 ship’s dispatches, Argentine Coast Guard.*

**Figure 2 - Average number of passengers carried per vessel on each voyage.**

**Ushuaia, 2021/2022 summer season**

Imagen en blanco y negro

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Note: (a) the *SV Bark Europa* is considered a training vessel, declaring it takes only trainees on board, who were included on the crew list.

*Source: UNTDF, based on data collected from 2021/2022 ship’s dispatches, Argentine Coast Guard.*

We registered the nationalities of passengers who went to Antarctica via Ushuaia’s port, identifying more than 80 nationalities. Most of the passengers were from the United States, followed by Germany, France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, Canada, Switzerland, Australia, Argentina, Netherlands, among others. Percentages of the main nationalities are represented in Figure 4, where a total of 20 nationalities account for the 95,10% of all visitors.

**Figure 3 - Vessels that made most voyages to Antarctica operating regularly.**

**Ushuaia, 2021/2022 summer season**

Gráfico, Gráfico de barras

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*Source: UNTDF, based on data collected from 2021/2022 ship’s dispatches, Argentine Coast Guard.*

**Figure 4 - Main nationalities of Antarctic visitors, in percentages. Ushuaia, 2021/2022 season**

**Gráfico

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*Source: UNTDF, based on data collected from 2021/2022 ship’s dispatches, Argentine Coast Guard.*

According to the registration of the vessels that operated in Antarctica throughout this season from Ushuaia, we observed that among the flag States of those vessels, three (3) are Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties (France, Netherlands and Norway) and one (1) is a Non-Consultative Party (Portugal). On the other hand, four (4) vessels are not registered to a Party to the Antarctic Treaty (Bahamas, Cyprus, Marshall Islands and Malta) (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Vessel registry. Ushuaia, 2021/2022 summer season**

Gráfico, Gráfico de barras

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*Source: UNTDF, based on data collected from 2021/2022 ship’s dispatches, Argentine Coast Guard.*

***Concluding remarks***

From the gathered data, it has been possible to elaborate statistic information allowing for the identification of the vessels that operated in Antarctica using the port of Ushuaia, during the 2021/2022 season, the number of trips made, the number of passengers and their nationalities, the average crew members per vessel, and the countries where the ships are registered.

It is worth noting that due to the situation caused by the pandemic, the 2021/2022 season has resumed trips to Antarctica after a previous season (2020/2021) without Antarctic tourism activity. However, there is a significantly lower number of ships, trips and number of passengers compared to the 2019/2020 season, in which a total of 68,360 visitors were transported to Antarctica via Ushuaia, distributed in 41 vessels that made 314 trips. In other words, during the season studied the decrease in the number of visitors was practically 75% with regard to 2019/2020. It is important to point out that large vessels did not participate during this last season.

All tour operators followed the health protocols established due to COVID-19. Several scheduled voyages were cancelled, and ships were observed nearby Ushuaia harbor having to remain in isolation.

The data herein presented aims to contribute, as an alternative and complementary source, in the assessment of tourism in the Antarctic Peninsula region, with special emphasis on those tourist vessels that call in at the port of Ushuaia.

1. It refers to the inbound and outbound clearance documentation provided by the master of the vessel. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Other small vessels such as *Hanse Explorer, La Datcha and Nansen Explorer* are not included in this report. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The average number of passengers on board is taken into account -not the capacity of the vessel, because in some cases it could be that vessels transport a smaller number of passengers than their total capacity. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)