Norwegian supervision scheme for Antarctic cruise operators

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**Background**

To inform ongoing discussions on onboard observer schemes for Antarctic cruise operators, Norway here presents the established system we have in place for supervisions of Norwegian Cruise operators.

**The legal framing**

The Norwegian Polar Institute, as the Norwegian competent authority for activities in Antarctica, conducts supervisions pursuant to the Norwegian Antarctic Regulations article 38, stating:

*“The Norwegian Polar Institute or a party authorised by the Norwegian Polar Institute shall supervise the implementation of these Regulations.*

*The supervising authority shall have unrestricted access to all installations, means of transport and areas where activities that fall within the scope of these Regulations are conducted.”*

The reason for conducting a supervision, is to make sure the activity is conducted in line with the plans from the operator, and of course in line with the national regulations. Following a supervision, remarks on the activity can be made, in addition to some suggestions for improvements. If activities are found to not be in line with the regulations, there is a legal basis for reporting the activity to the police.

**The Norwegian supervision framework**

The Norwegian Polar Institute (NPI) has previously conducted five supervisions (2002, 2005, 2007, 2013, 2019) onboard Norwegian cruise ships in Antarctica. With basis in the regulations, any Norwegian activity may be subject to a supervision, but until now the cruise industry is the only activity where supervisions have taken place, as other vessel-based activities typically are small sail expeditions.

Norway has recently developed short guidelines and templates to be used for our supervisions. We intend to conduct supervision on one vessel from one of the Norwegian Antarctic cruise operators every 3rd year. From the coming season there will be two Antarctic cruise operators who are accountable under the Norwegian Antarctic regulations. This entails that a supervision will be undertaken for each cruise operator every 6th year.

**How a supervision is conducted**

Before departure on a supervision, there are several preparations that are required:

1. Supervisory personnel must be formally appointed in advance.
2. It is recommended that two supervisors be appointed, based on the experience our former supervisors have presented. With two colleagues, it is possible to have discussions, cover all activity better and get a second opinion on different matters. In all former inspections, only one supervisor has been appointed.
3. Preparation of checklist, following a template.
4. Print / store on PC all of the documents needed for the inspection. There is often poor internet access on board so all documents must be stored on a PC or printed.
5. Example of relevant documents to bring:

* visitor site guidelines
* IAATO guidelines
* other guidelines
* letter of approval
* any formal decisions
* Notification / IEE / SAR / SOPEP / other attachments to the notification

On board the ship:

1. Contact the captain / expedition leader. Arrange a first meeting to review the checklist during the crossing.
2. Ask to be allowed to present supervisory personnel and the supervisory method.
3. Go through the checklist along the way. Verify through examinations / inspections.
4. Participate in all activities / landings. Be sure to make observations both at the start, during and at the end of all landings. Follow checklist for landings. Plan the inspection in advance, read site guidelines and participate in guide and passenger briefings.
5. Many things may change during a landing that can take more than 5 hours (eg. wind / weather / personnel and more). It is often interesting and valuable to see how the guides / expedition management plan the disembarkation (before passengers go ashore) and how they leave a landing site. There is often time pressure at both start and end.
6. Watch how passengers wash boots / equipment / clothing during the crossing and before landing.
7. Ask to attend all the meetings that the guides conduct.
8. Be present on the bridge when the expedition management and captain plan landing operations, etc.
9. Attend meetings to which passengers are invited.
10. Make notes on all observations daily. Take photos and save photos daily. It is difficult to remember details afterwards. This information is important documentation.
11. Summarize and present main findings on the crossing back to the mainland. Invite everyone who has been interviewed. All guides should be included.

After the supervision:

1. Write a preliminary report following the template and present it to the operator to get a check on factual errors.
2. Follow up any findings in next year's follow-up of the report and annual meeting, possibly separately (depending on whether deviations or remarks are made).

Using these simple, but detailed guidelines together with templates for reporting during the supervision aids in securing quality and equal treatment of the different cruise operators.

**Summary and conclusion**

Norway views supervision to be an important part of the management of tourism in Antarctica, as it gives us on ground observation and experience of the activities. We experience a good cooperation with the cruise operators in relation to the supervision. During the last supervision only minor remarks were made, and the operator performed the activity in accordance with their notification and plans.

In addition to supervisions, we conduct annual meetings with the Antarctic cruise operators, usually in May, to discuss the cruise season that has passed, and to hear about the coming season. In addition to the previous and upcoming cruise seasons we also discuss relevant points from the IAATO meeting and CEP and ATCM. This instrument is important in conjunction with the supervisions, as the dialogue is important for both the cruise operator and to us.