Report on Antarctic tourist flows and cruise ships operating in Ushuaia during the 2022/2023 Austral summer season

English version provided by the author

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***Information Paper submitted by Argentina***

***Summary***

This paper provides information about the flows of passengers and vessels that visited Antarctica during the 2022/2023 Austral summer season, operating from the port of Ushuaia. The number of voyages, passengers and their nationalities, average number of crew per vessel, expedition staff 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 the mid-1990´s, concentrating approximately 90% of the worldwide ship-borne Antarctic tourist activity.

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; and, 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 the 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.

In order to present the status of tourist flows of visitors and vessels that, through Ushuaia’s port, visited Antarctica in the 2022/2023 season, data was collected from the ship’s dispatches[[1]](#footnote-1) provided to Prefectura Naval Argentina (Argentine Coast Guard), national competent authority to that effect, together with documents in custody at the Dirección Provincial de Puertos (Provincial Port Authority) in Ushuaia. 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 was 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 through Ushuaia during the 2022/2023 Austral summer season***

The 2022/2023 tourist season started on October 13th when the vessel *Ushuaia* (Antarpply Expeditions) set sail for Antarctica, and finished on April 4th with the arrival of the *vessels Sylvia Earle* (Aurora Expeditions)and *Ushuaia* (Antarpply Expeditions) to the port of Ushuaia. There were a total of 407 voyages run by 52 vessels, including the *SV Bark Europa.* January was the busiest month regarding the number of Antarctic voyages (27.76%), followed by December (22.60%) (See Figure 1).

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

**Ushuaia, 2022/2023 summer season**

Gráfico, Gráfico de barras

Descripción generada automáticamente

*Source: Universidad Nacional de Tierra del Fuego, Antártida e Islas del Atlántico Sur (UNTDF), based on data collected from 2022/2023 ship’s dispatches, Argentine Coast Guard.*

During the 2022/2023 season, 96,274 visitors went to Antarctica, using Ushuaia as a connection port from and/or to the Antarctic territory. Three passenger categories can be identified: **a)** those that departed from and returned to the port of Ushuaia, **b)** those that either departed from or arrived in Ushuaia -that is, passengers who went through Ushuaia only once, either on arrival or departure to Antarctica- and **c)** those that visited Ushuaia in transit on their way to or from Antarctica, embarking or disembarking at other ports (See Table 1). In the first case (a), only the departure of the vessels was considered in order to count the passengers. In the second case (b), both the passengers who arrived at, and the ones who departed from the port of Ushuaia were taken into account, because several vessels either started or finished their voyages in other ports, either combining with other means of transport such as flight-cruise, or visited Antarctica as part of the beginning and/or end of season voyage, operating locally (in Ushuaia) during the rest of the season. Finally, the last case (c) refers to vessels in transit, with passengers that were counted upon arrival or departure, depending on the case when calling in at the port of Ushuaia.

**Table 1 - Breakdown according to ships’ itineraries. Ushuaia, 2022/2023 summer season**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **a) EMBARKATION AND DISEMBARKATION IN USHUAIA** | **b) EMBARKATION OR DISEMBARKATION IN USHUAIA** | **c) IN TRANSIT IN USHUAIA** | **TOTAL** |
| **NUMBER OF VISITORS** | 55,761 | 5,700 | 34,813 | 96,274 |
| **PERCENTAGE OF VISITORS** | 58% | 5.9% | 36.1% | 100% |
| **NUMBER OF VOYAGES** | 333 | 52 | 22 | 407 |
| **PERCENTAGE OF VOYAGES** | 81.82% | 12.78% | 5.4% | 100 % |

*Source: UNTDF, based on data collected from 2022/2023 ship’s dispatches, Argentine Coast Guard.*

Antarctic visitors travelled in tourist vessels of different sizes. In this regard, a distinction was made, according to the provisions of Measure 15 (2009) adopted in the XXXII Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, between vessels that transported 500 passengers or less, and those that transported more than 500 passengers. Therefore, 10 vessels carried more than 500 passengers completing 21 trips in total and transporting 34,413 passengers, representing 35.74% of the passengers that visited Antarctica.

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

**Table 2 - Average number of crew and passengers per vessel and number of voyages.**

**Ushuaia, 2022/2023 summer season**

| **VESSEL** | **AVERAGE CREW PER VOYAGE** | **AVERAGE PASSENGERS PER VOYAGE** (a) | **NUMBER OF VOYAGES** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Bark Europa* (b) | 53 | 0 | 5 |
| *Expedition* | 72 | 122 | 13 |
| *Fridtjof Nansen* | 157 | 364 | 13 |
| *Greg Mortimer* | 93 | 108 | 11 |
| *Hamburg* | 152 | 286 | 4 |
| *Hanseatic Inspiration* | 173 | 185 | 5 |
| *Hanseatic Nature* | 170 | 169 | 6 |
| *Hanseatic Spirit* | 169 | 178 | 4 |
| *Hebridean Sky* | 78 | 94 | 8 |
| *Hondius* | 74 | 165 | 11 |
| *Island Sky* | 80 | 96 | 7 |
| *L´Austral* | 158 | 164 | 12 |
| *Le Boreal* | 156 | 188 | 11 |
| *Le Commandant Charcot* | 199 | 129 | 8 |
| *Le Lyrial* | 140 | 151 | 9 |
| *Magellan Explorer* | 62 | 76 | 6 |
| *National Geographic Endurance* | 100 | 130 | 6 |
| *National Geographic Explorer* | 86 | 147 | 11 |
| *National Geographic Resolution* | 100 | 133 | 8 |
| *Ocean Adventurer* | 74 | 117 | 7 |
| *Ocean Diamond* | 103 | 173 | 10 |
| *Ocean Endeavour* | 102 | 201 | 13 |
| *Ocean Explorer* | 99 | 114 | 4 |
| *Ocean Nova* | 44 | 67 | 6 |
| *Ocean Victory* | 102 | 172 | 13 |
| *Ortelius* | 53 | 100 | 9 |
| *Plancius* | 47 | 105 | 12 |
| *Roald Amundsen* | 144 | 298 | 11 |
| *Scenic Eclipse* | 199 | 184 | 9 |
| *Sea Spirit* | 80 | 106 | 11 |
| *Seabourn Venture* | 240 | 210 | 9 |
| *Seabourn Quest* | 383 | 400 | 1 |
| *Seaventure* | 87 | 138 | 11 |
| *SH Vega* | 114 | 99 | 11 |
| *Sylvia Earle* | 107 | 110 | 8 |
| *Ultramarine* | 137 | 133 | 10 |
| *Ushuaia* | 43 | 87 | 16 |
| *Viking Octantis* | 262 | 346 | 10 |
| *Viking Polaris* | 263 | 313 | 11 |
| *World Explorer* | 110 | 147 | 10 |
| *World Navigator* | 129 | 150 | 13 |
| *World Traveller* | 128 | 140 | 13 |
| *Azamara Pursuit* | 394 | 664 | 1 |
| *Balmoral* | 543 | 878 | 1 |
| *Celebrity Infinity* | 950 | 2042 | 4 |
| *Insignia* | 398 | 610 | 1 |
| *Marina* | 748 | 1174 | 2 |
| *Norwegian Star* | 1038 | 2128 | 4 |
| *Oosterdam* | 757 | 1707 | 3 |
| *Sapphire Princess* | 1030 | 2114 | 3 |
| *Seven Seas Voyager* | 447 | 607 | 1 |
| *Volendam* | 582 | 1170 | 1 |

**Note:** vessels that carried more than 500 passengers are highlighted in grey; (a) staff members are also included in the average number whenever they were listed on the passenger manifests (expedition staff); (b) 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 2022/2023 ship’s dispatches, Argentine Coast Guard.*

Among the vessels in transit in Ushuaia, those that sailed through Antarctic waters without disembarking in Antarctica are noteworthy. As previously stated, these cruise ships completed itineraries around the southern parts of South America, or were involved in more extensive voyages and, on certain itineraries, they included navigating in waters close to the Antarctic Peninsula. Most of these vessels run “pendular” trips along Beagle Channel to connect ports located on the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and visit Antarctica either from the Atlantic or from the Pacific. Table 3 provides an overview of the vessels that transported more than 500 passengers per trip, highlighting if the visit to Antarctica was before or after the port call in Ushuaia.

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

**Ushuaia, 2022/2023 summer season**

**Gráfico, Gráfico de barras

Descripción generada automáticamente con confianza media**

*Source: UNTDF, based on data collected from 2022/2023 ship’s dispatches, Argentine Coast Guard.*

It is worth noting that the vessels *Greg Mortimer, Magellan Explorer, Ocean Adventurer, Ocean Nova, Ocean Explorer* and *Sylvia Earle*, operated differently than the rest of the vessels in some voyages, as they did so directly from King George Island (Isla 25 de Mayo), South Shetland Islands (Islas Shetland del Sur), embarking passengers that flew in and out from Punta Arenas (Chile). Voyages that started and/or ended in Ushuaia were considered in the count when carrying passengers, but those that operated only with crew and staff were not.

Besides, other vessels such as the *National Geographic Endurance, Le Commandant Charcot* and *Ortelius* made circumnavigation voyages of the Antarctic continent between Ushuaia and Bluff (New Zealand) in both directions according to the ship destination.

**Table 3 - Cruise ships that carried more than 500 passengers.**

**Ushuaia, 2022/2023 summer season**

| **VESSELS** | **ARRIVALS IN USHUAIA**(a) | | | **DEPARTURES FROM USHUAIA**(a) | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date (b) | Crew | Pax | Date(b) | Crew | Pax |
| *Azamara Pursuit* | --- | --- | --- | 1/12/22 | 394 | 664 |
| *Balmoral* | --- | --- | --- | 15/2/23 | 543 | 870 |
| *Celebrity Infinity* | --- | --- | --- | 18/1/23 | 933 | 2014 |
| *Celebrity Infinity* | --- | --- | --- | 1/2/23 | 964 | 2045 |
| *Celebrity Infinity* | --- | --- | --- | 15/2/23 | 951 | 2039 |
| *Celebrity Infinity* | --- | --- | --- | 1/3/23 | 952 | 2071 |
| *Insignia* | --- | --- | --- | 15/2/23 | 398 | 610 |
| *Marina* | 30/1/23 | 750 | 1181 | --- | --- | --- |
| *Marina* | --- | --- | --- | 15/2/23 | 746 | 1167 |
| *Norwegian Star* | --- | --- | --- | 21/1/23 | 1045 | 2428 |
| *Norwegian Star* | --- | --- | --- | 4/2/23 | 1050 | 2027 |
| *Norwegian Star* | --- | --- | --- | 18/2/28 | 1041 | 2141 |
| *Norwegian Star* | --- | --- | --- | 4/3/23 | 1018 | 1918 |
| *Oosterdam* | 4/1/23 | 755 | 1639 | --- | --- | --- |
| *Oosterdam* | --- | --- | --- | 18/1/23 | 755 | 1739 |
| *Oosterdam* | 17/2/23 | 762 | 1742 | --- | --- | --- |
| *Sapphire Princess* | --- | --- | --- | 24/12/23 | 1016 | 2280 |
| *Sapphire Princess* | 15/1/23 | 1024 | 2035 | --- | --- | --- |
| *Sapphire Princess* | --- | --- | --- | 25/1/23 | 1049 | 2026 |
| *Seven Seas Voyager* | 9/2/23 | 447 | 607 | --- | --- | --- |
| *Volendam* | --- | --- | --- | 29/1/23 | 582 | 1170 |

Notes: (a) Only the Antarctic voyages are represented above, and it is indicated whether visits to Antarctica were made before or after the port call in Ushuaia.

(b )dd/mm/yy.

*Source: UNTDF, based on data collected from 2022/2023 ship’s dispatches, Argentine Coast Guard.*

Furthermore, 32 vessels ran regular voyages to and from Antarctica operating throughout the season from Ushuaia, and they account for 62% of the total number of vessels that were analyzed. Each of these vessels made between 7 and 16 voyages to Antarctica, as indicated in Figure 3.

Regarding visitors who went to Antarctica through the port of Ushuaia, the nationalities of passengers who made landings were registered. In this regard, more than 100 nationalities were identified, with most of the passengers being from the United States, followed by Australia, Germany, United Kingdom, Canada, France, China, Switzerland, Netherlands, New Zealand and the Russian Federation, among others. Percentages of the main nationalities are represented in Figure 4, where a total of 20 nationalities account for the 95.02% of all visitors.

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

**Ushuaia, 2022/2023 summer season**

**Imagen en blanco y negro

Descripción generada automáticamente con confianza baja**

*Source: UNTDF, based on data collected from 2022/2023 ship’s dispatches, Argentine Coast Guard.*

According to Measure 15 (2009), adopted at the XXXII Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, which recommends a ratio of one guide every 20 passengers, expedition staff members included on the crew and/or on the passenger lists, have been identified. Keeping a direct relationship with passengers, expedition staff members perform different roles, such as expedition leaders, naturalist guides and lecturers, and are in charge of leading passengers during the landing activities. The only trips considered here have been the ones made by vessels that carry 500 passengers or less. In most voyages, expedition staff is included in the crew manifest, followed by the passenger manifest (See Table 4). It is worth mentioning that the expedition staff position is stated only when they are so listed on the crew manifest.

**Figure 4 - Main nationalities of Antarctic visitors, in percentages. Ushuaia, 2022/2023 season**

**Gráfico, Gráfico en cascada

Descripción generada automáticamente**

*Source: UNTDF, based on data collected from 2022/2023 ship’s dispatches, Argentine Coast Guard.*

**Table 4. Expedition staff reported on the ship’s dispatches. Ushuaia, 2022/2023 summer season**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **CREW**  **LIST** | **PASSENGER LIST** | **CREW AND PASSENGER LISTS** | **WITHOUT DATA** |
| 64.13% | 11.79% | 7.37% | 16.71% |

*Fuente: elaboración de la UNTDF a partir de los despachos de buques 2022/2023, Prefectura Naval Argentina*

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, four (4) are Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties (France, the Netherlands, Norway and United Kingdom) and one (1) is a Non-Consultative Party (Portugal). On the other hand, seven vessels (7) are not registered to a Party to the Antarctic Treaty (Bahamas, Cyprus, Liberia, Marshall Islands, Malta, Panama and Togo) (See Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Vessel registry. Ushuaia, 2022/2023 summer season**

Gráfico, Gráfico de barras, Gráfico de superficie

Descripción generada automáticamente

*Fuente: elaboración de la UNTDF a partir de los despachos de buques 2022/2023, Prefectura Naval Argentina*

***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 2022/2023 season, the number of trips made, the number of passengers and their nationalities, the average of crew members per vessel, the expedition staff and the countries where the ships are registered.

The development of this season shows a significant increase in the number of vessels, voyages and number of passengers. Taking the 2019/2020 season as a reference, as it was barely influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, the total number of passengers who have visited Antarctica through the port of Ushuaia increased by 40.83%. Voyages rose 29.61%.

The number of voyages made by larger vessels that only navigate Antarctic waters has increased to 21 trips made by ten vessels, transporting 34,413 passengers; showing 84.73% more passengers than the reference season 2019/2020.

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. 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-2)