



# South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands

Office of the Commissioner  
Government House  
Stanley  
Falkland Islands

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## South Georgia stands ready to welcome visitors

The COVID-19 pandemic presents a range of obstacles to navigate in order for the 2020/21 tourism season to take place, however GSGSSI is committed to meet the challenge and facilitate visits where possible, without compromising on our commitment to safe and environmentally sensitive tourism.

South Georgia remains free from COVID-19 and we will be taking extra precautions to ensure the safety of staff and visitors. We have been working on a detailed plan to help deliver a tourism season and develop measures to provide the safeguards needed to protect South Georgia.

These measures and precautions are in addition to a host of measures and precautions that IAATO and vessel operators will take to ensure the safety of their guests and staff before reaching South Georgia.

**A new 3-part Health Declaration will be in place** to ensure vessels are properly risk assessed, before arrival into the Maritime Zone, again before landing at Grytviken and a third element ensures that contact tracing is achieved should anybody test positive for COVID-19 in the 14 days following the visit.

Vessels with confirmed COVID-19 cases will not be permitted to land, but vessels which have more generic flu-like symptoms but do not believe they are COVID-19 will be able to land outside of Grytviken if they have dispensation to do so. Landings at Grytviken will only be permitted if assurance can be provided that the vessel is free from COVID-19.

For the first visit of the season, dispensation to land outside of Grytviken will be given on successful completion of the online Permit Holder Briefing and Assessment, and dispensation is maintained by passing the biosecurity audit undertaken at each visit to Grytviken.

**All indoor spaces at Grytviken will be closed** e.g. Museum, Church, Gift Shop, Post Office and Toilets. Grytviken whaling station and the cemetery will be open for visitors to explore and a 'remote' Post Office service will be available for visitors to post letters or purchase gifts. King Edward Point will be out of bounds.

**Administration Fee:** A fee to cover the cost of applications that are subsequently cancelled was set to be introduced this season, and as such it is referenced in the Visiting South Georgia 2020/21 booklet however, in light of the ongoing global COVID-19 situation and the uncertainty that exists in the market place, its introduction has been postponed for 12 months. The Visiting South Georgia 2020/21 guide includes this new fee. The late application fee (less than 60 days) remains in place and will be applied.

**New policy for the use of HOV & ROVs.** We have published a new policy governing the use of Human Occupied Vehicles and Remotely Operated Vehicles in the SGSSI Maritime Zones. Operators wishing to use submersibles can now apply to do so by filling in the relevant application form as an annex to the Vessel or Yacht Visit Application.

**The Vessel Visit Application form has been changed** to accommodate the use of HOVs & ROVs, and we have removed the section from the Vessel Visit Application which asked for predicted itineraries. We will accept completed applications from the 1<sup>st</sup> July, and to facilitate for the later opening of the ship scheduler, we can now accept the form in separate parts, enabling operators to submit part 1 now, and part 2 after the ship scheduler opens.

**Cooper Bay:** Last season samples were successfully collected at Cooper Bay to identify if the site is safe to reopen after more than a decade closed due to an outbreak of avian cholera. So far, all test results have come back negative for pathogens, and although work is still ongoing, we hope to be in a position to reopen the site later in the 2020/21 season – watch this space!

**Prion Island:** We are planning extensive works to improve the boardwalk over the 2020/21 season, and to accommodate that Prion Island will be closed for the duration of the season – apologies for any disappointment this may cause. Zodiac cruising to observe the wandering albatross is still possible.

**South Georgia – A Visitors Guide:** We've created a new briefing film which is mandatory viewing for everyone going ashore and will provide an insight into the work that goes into protecting South Georgia, and inspire visitors to play their part. There will be more news on this soon when the film is ready for distribution.

The 2020/21 Season documentation and application forms are available here: <http://www.gov.gs/docsarchive/visitors/>