

Tourism in Antarctica – Some Background

Highlights in a Timeline of Human Activity and Tourism in Antarctica

| Day | Month | Year | Event |
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| 30 | January | 1774 | Captain James Cook sails the HMS Resolution to 71°10' S, coming within about 75 miles of the Antarctic mainland without seeing it. Many explorers before James Cook had ventured in search of a southern ice cap, the existence of which had been the subject of speculation as early as 600BC. |
| 19 | February | 1819 | Englishman <u>William Smith</u> becomes the first person to sight land south of 60°S when he sets eyes on <u>Livingston Island</u> in the South Shetlands. |
| | September | 1819 | Spanish Navy ship <u>San Telmo</u> sinks when trying to cross Cape Horn. She has 644 people on board. The wreckage is found on the northern coast of Livingston Island, but it is unknown if any survivors managed to be the first to set foot on Antarctic soil. This disaster remains the biggest single loss-of-life accident in the Antarctic. |
| 27 | January | 1820 | <u>Fabian Gottlieb von Bellingshausen</u> discovers mainland Antarctica. |
| | | 1839-43 | <u>James Clark Ross</u> discovers the <u>Ross Ice Shelf</u> , <u>Ross Sea</u> , <u>Mount Erebus</u> , <u>Mount Terror</u> and <u>Victoria Land</u> . |
| | | 1892-93 | During the Jason expedition, <u>Carl Anton Larsen</u> becomes the first person to ski in Antarctica |
| 4 | February | 1902 | Captain Robert Falcon Scott ascends to 244m in a tethered, hydrogen-filled balloon when his vessel anchors off the Ross Ice Shelf. |
| | | 1901-03 | Professor Erich von Drygalski uses a balloon to survey the coastal terrain of Wilhelm II Land. |
| 16 | January | 1909 | A member of Shackleton's expedition, Professor Edgeworth David, becomes the first person to reach the South Magnetic Pole. |
| | | 1910-13 | Scott's ill-fated expedition to Antarctica takes place. |
| | | 1910 | Travel company Thomas Cook advertises a planned expedition to Antarctica. However, the tragic outcome of Scott's expedition eventually dampens public enthusiasm for such a venture. The expedition never takes place. |
| | December | 1924 | The Falkland Islands Dependencies Government Mail Service begins taking mail, passengers and cargo between the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and South Shetland Islands. |
| 16 | November | 1928 | Sir Hubert Wilkins, an Australian, flies from Deception Island in a Lockheed Vega monoplane. This was the first winged flight . A few weeks later he undertakes an 11-hour photographic flight, launching again from Deception Island. |

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| 28-9 | November | 1929 | 50 years to the day before the Erebus tragedy, US Navy pilot Richard Byrd, leading a private expedition, makes a 16-hour return flight from the Ross Ice Shelf to the South Pole in a Ford Tri-motor monoplane. |
| 3 | November | 1930 | The New York Times advertises a proposed 142-day luxury cruise to the Antarctic at a cost, per head, of between US\$2500 and US\$6500. It was to carry the first women to the Antarctic, but, as with Thomas Cook's effort in 1910, this journey never eventuated. |
| | | 1935 | The first women reach Antarctica aboard a Norwegian whaling vessel |
| | | 1946 | The US military launches a major Antarctic expedition. Six Navy versions of the DC-3 (R4D Skytrains) make multiple survey flights from an ice runway close to the site of that used by Byrd in 1929. This expedition is also led by Byrd, who is now a Rear Admiral. |
| 15 | February | 1947 | Richard Byrd repeats his journey of 1929 over the South Pole, but this time in a DC-3. |
| 22 | December | 1956 | A Douglas DC6B of Linea Aerea Nacional (the Chilean national airline) flies non-stop from Chacabuco over the South Shetland Islands and Trinity Peninsula, carrying 66 passengers. This was the earliest Antarctic tourist flight . |
| | | 1957 | The first aircraft landing on Ross Island occurs. Scott Base is established. |
| | | 1957 | The US Navy commences regular flights between Christchurch and McMurdo, using C-124 Globemasters. |
| 15 | October | 1957 | A Pan American Stratocruiser carries VIPs from Christchurch to McMurdo. This is a one-off event for the IGY, but was also the first commercial flight to land in Antarctica with the first tourists to reach the continent. |
| | | 1957-58 | International Geophysical Year (IGY) focusing on research in Antarctica and outer space. Chilean and Argentinian ships carry over 500 tourists to the South Shetland Islands. |
| 4 | January | 1958 | Edmund Hillary and his team reach the South Pole using farm tractors equipped for polar travel – the first group of motor vehicles to reach the Pole. |
| | | 1958-9 | US Globemasters make 37 return trips to McMurdo from Christchurch to support the US science programme. |
| 1 | Dec | 1959 | Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the UK, the USA and the USSR sign the Antarctic Treaty . |
| 23 | June | 1961 | Antarctic Treaty comes into force |
| | | 1964 | At the Third Consultative Meeting of the Antarctic Treaty parties, a recommendation is passed requiring the exchange of "information on airfield facilities in the Antarctic Treaty area." |
| | | 1966 | Annual seaborne tourist voyages begin |

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| | | 1966 | <p>At the Fourth Consultative Meeting of the Antarctic Treaty parties, a recommendation is passed requiring “the Government of a country in which a tourist or other non-scientific expedition is being organised [to] furnish notice of the expedition as soon as possible through diplomatic channels to any other Government whose station the expedition plans to visit.”</p> <p>[It is not clear whether, under this provision, New Zealand would have had to notify the Americans of the planned overflights in the 1970s, given that no actual “visit” was to take place.]</p> |
| | | 1968 | <p>A chartered Convair 990A flies over the South Pole at low altitude carrying 70 tourists. It also lands at McMurdo and the passengers visit McMurdo Station and Scott’s hut.</p> <p>The flight is part of a round-the-world tourist flight to raise money for the Admiral Richard Evelyn Byrd Polar Center in Boston. On the same flight, tourists were also treated to a flight over the North Pole.</p> |
| 26 | June | 1968 | United States policy statement regarding aviation in Antarctica issued. (Refer to text below for details) |
| | | 1969 | “Expedition cruising” to Antarctica begins with the building of the <i>Linblad Explorer</i> , which could carry 98 passengers. |
| | | 1971 | National expeditions (ie those sponsored by governments) begin the regular carriage of tourists. |
| | | 1972 | At the Seventh Consultative Meeting of the Antarctic Treaty parties, a recommendation is passed that expresses concern at the impact of increasing numbers of tourists on the Antarctic environment. The recommendation proposes to draft a “statement of accepted practices and relevant provisions [of the Antarctic Treaty] about which all visitors to the Treaty area should be aware.” |
| | | 1975 | At the Eighth Consultative Meeting of the Antarctic Treaty parties, a recommendation is passed that limits the areas of Antarctica to which tourists may have access. The meeting also draws up a draft of the “statement of accepted practices” referred to in the previous meeting. |
| 13 | February | 1977 | QANTAS commences a regular austral-summer series of tourist overflights. |
| 15 | February | 1977 | Air New Zealand commences similar operations. |
| | Summer | 1977 | 5 QANTAS and Air New Zealand overflights operate. |
| | Summer | 1977-78 | 16 QANTAS and Air New Zealand overflights operate. |
| | | 1979 | At the Tenth Consultative Meeting of the Antarctic Treaty parties, a recommendation is passed expressing concern that the current level of tourist overflight activity exceeds air traffic control and search-and-rescue capabilities. |
| | Summer | 1978-79 | 17 QANTAS and Air New Zealand overflights operate. |

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| 28 | November | 1979 | Air New Zealand flight TE-901 crashes into Mount Erebus, killing all 257 people on board. |
| | Summer | 1979-80 | 7 QANTAS and Air New Zealand overflights operate. |
| 16 | February | 1980 | Last commercial tourist overflight by QANTAS |
| | | 1994 | QANTAS resumes Antarctic overflights. |

Material sourced from:

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