

Rules & Regs (and some suggestions) for yachts/sailboats visiting Antarctica

According to the Antarctic Treaty, all boats going to Antarctica (including small private yachts) must apply to their national government for permits. Additional permits are usually required for activities beyond beach landings (eg camping, using cook stoves ashore, mountaineering.)

For further information, help with site policies, and informed answers to your questions, IAATO (<http://www.iaato.org>) has a program for one off yacht visitors.

Yacht visitors can be extremely dangerous to local wildlife if precautions aren't observed. It is hard to believe, but your food wastes and dirty boots can cause epidemics among penguin and seal colonies and potentially kill thousands of animals. The Antarctic environment is extremely fragile and its wildlife has no immunities against diseases introduced from north of the Antarctic Convergence.

Food Wastes & Rubbish:

Biodegradable wastes:

It is easy enough to keep biodegradable wastes on board the boat until you are outside Antarctic waters. A plastic barrel ("open head drum") with a secure lid, lashed securely on deck works well. 55 gallons / 200 litres will see 8 people through 3+ weeks in Antarctica. (Several smaller barrels may be easier to manage.)

Everything can go into the barrel ... tea leaves, coffee grounds, oil drained from tuna and chicken tins, fat from cooking, paper towels, etc. etc. Dishwater can be strained with a mesh strainer before dumping. It won't smell if it has a lid and is stored on deck in the cold.

In the past, wastes from chicken products have been responsible for introducing avian diseases into penguin colonies. Other food products could have harmful effects, and the cold slows down rotting to the point that even tiny items like coffee grounds would take years to degrade.

There is no burning of rubbish permitted in the Antarctic.

Tins/Cans & Bottles:

These should be stored on board and disposed of in your next port. They shouldn't be thrown over the side inside the Antarctic Convergence, as the extreme cold means they will take hundreds of years* to rust, and around each one will be a circle of pollutants which can kill critical elements of the food chain.

If you wash tins out with the regular dishwashing, remove the bottom and flatten them, they take up far less room than they did when full and will not smell. A plastic bin is a good place to store them, as plastic garbage bags will tear.

* I don't have figures for Antarctica but in temperate climates, it takes approximately 100 years for steel and 200-500 years for aluminum cans to degrade; figures for the Antarctic are presumably much higher.

