

Government of South Georgia
& the South Sandwich Islands



Annual Visitor Report

July 2021 to June 2022

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Introduction

The 2019-20 season was the last at South Georgia, and record numbers of visitors arrived at the island, despite the season closing early as the COVID-19 pandemic swept the globe. With the pandemic perpetuating, the cruise ship industry was unable to operate during the 2020-21 season, with only one yacht, *Golden Fleece*, visiting in February 2021 with 5 people on board.

The 2021-2022 tourism season marked a tentative return of cruise ships to South Georgia. Fewer vessels visited, and visitor numbers were down markedly from previous 'normal' seasons, as vessels were not operating at full capacity. With a constantly evolving global response to the pandemic, several vessels changed their itineraries or cancelled visits. Those that did arrive were given a COVID-19 risk rating; Red for vessels with active COVID-19 cases on board, Amber for those vessels that did not fulfil the Green criteria and Green for those cases where they fulfilled vaccination and/or minimum time at sea requirements. This affected their visits to Grytviken and the interactions Government Officers could have with them.

Summary

This report covers the period from July 2021 to June 2022. A total of 5,374 cruise ship passengers arrived on 27 cruise ships, which is very low compared to the last normal cruise ship season (2019-20) in which 78 cruise ships visited with 12,521 passengers. Twenty-five visits were cancelled, with some vessel changing itineraries and others cancelling entirely due to the developing COVID-19 situation.

In addition, there were seven visits from yachts, which includes two trips by *S/V Australis*, with a combined total of 54 passengers and crew. Whilst some private yachts visited, the majority were chartered by film crews.

Over this season, 11,829 people (22,332 in the 2019/20 season) visited South Georgia, which includes cruise ship passengers, crew, expedition staff and yacht visitors.

Part 1: COVID-19

At the start of the season, global COVID-19 precautions were slowly being lifted. However, in December the presence of a new and more contagious variant, Omicron, led to changes in various countries protocols.

To minimise the risk of possible COVID-19 transmission to South Georgia, procedures were set out to maintain the Coronavirus free status of the resident personnel. The response to the COVID-19 pandemic was constantly evolving, with three versions of the GSGSSI COVID-19 Visitor Policy issued throughout the season. King Edward Point and Hope Point remained closed to visitors for the whole season.

Vessels wishing to visit South Georgia were placed into one of three categories; Red, Amber or Green, dependent on their disease status, previous routing, time at sea and places visited.

Green Vessels

These vessels fulfilled criteria on time at sea and/or vaccination status. For these vessels, it was business as usual, with Government Officers boarding to undertake immigration, customs and biosecurity clearance. Landing at Grytviken was permitted, with indoor facilities including the church, museum and post office.

Amber Vessels

Amber vessels were those that did not fully meet the criteria to be considered as a Green vessel, but did not have confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 on board. Government Officers did not board these vessels, with immigration and customs clearance conducted remotely. Vessels were asked to conduct and report on enhanced biosecurity self-audits. Landings at Grytviken were permitted, but all indoor facilities were closed to them.

Red Vessels

Red vessels were vessels which had confirmed or suspected isolated cases of COVID-19 on board. Government Officers did not board Red vessels, with immigration and customs clearance conducted remotely. Vessels were asked to conduct and report on enhanced biosecurity self-audits. Landings at Grytviken were not permitted. Only persons testing negative for COVID-19 in the 48hours immediately prior to landing were permitted ashore anywhere on the landmass of South Georgia (outside of Grytviken).

Season Summary

Of the 49 cruise ship visits this season, 24 vessels were classed as Green and had business as usual. Government Officers did not board the 14 Amber vessels and 9 Red vessels. There were two vessels, which, although fulfilling the criteria for Green status, were treated as Amber. One requested this in order to reduce contact with those outside their bubble, while the other arrived while there was a cold amongst the KEP residents which we did not want to spread.

As all visiting yachts came via the Falkland Islands, the crews all undertook 14 days of quarantine there and therefore had Green COVID-19 status.

Using these precautionary measures, COVID-19 was successfully kept from infecting resident personnel during the whole of the season.

Part 2: Cruise Ships

Annual Trends

Twenty-seven different cruise ships made 49 separate visits. This is a significant decline in both the number of visits and the number of passenger, with numbers at their lowest since the 2004/2005 season (excepting the 2020/21 season, when no cruise ships visited).

Season	Voyages	Passengers	Staff	Crew	Others	Total
2011/12	51	5,831 (58.4%)	578 (5.8%)	3,569 (35.7%)	6 (0.1%)	9,984
2012/13	51	5,792 (58.0%)	612 (6.1%)	3,552 (35.6%)	24 (0.2%)	9,980
2013/14	55	7,024 (59.6%)	667 (5.7%)	4,080 (34.6%)	21 (0.2%)	11,792
2014/15	65	8,142 (58.9%)	827 (6.0%)	4,837 (35.0%)	23 (0.2%)	13,829
2015/16	68	8,787 (57.6%)	915 (6.0%)	5,549 (36.4%)	13 (0.1%)	15,264
2016/17	68	8,946 (58.5%)	890 (5.9%)	5,459 (36%)	11 (0.1%)	15,303
2017/18	82	10,109 (57%)	1,089 (6.1%)	6,498 (36.3%)	24 (0.1%)	17,720
2018/19	78	10,337 (57.4%)	1,110 (6.2%)	6,550 (36.3%)	21 (0.1%)	18,018
2019/20	78	12,521 (56.3%)	1,222 (5.5%)	8,468 (38.1%)	33 (0.1%)	22,244
2020/21	0	0	0	0	0	0
2021/22	49	5,374	759	5,689	7	11,829

Table 1. Summary of cruise ship visitor numbers.

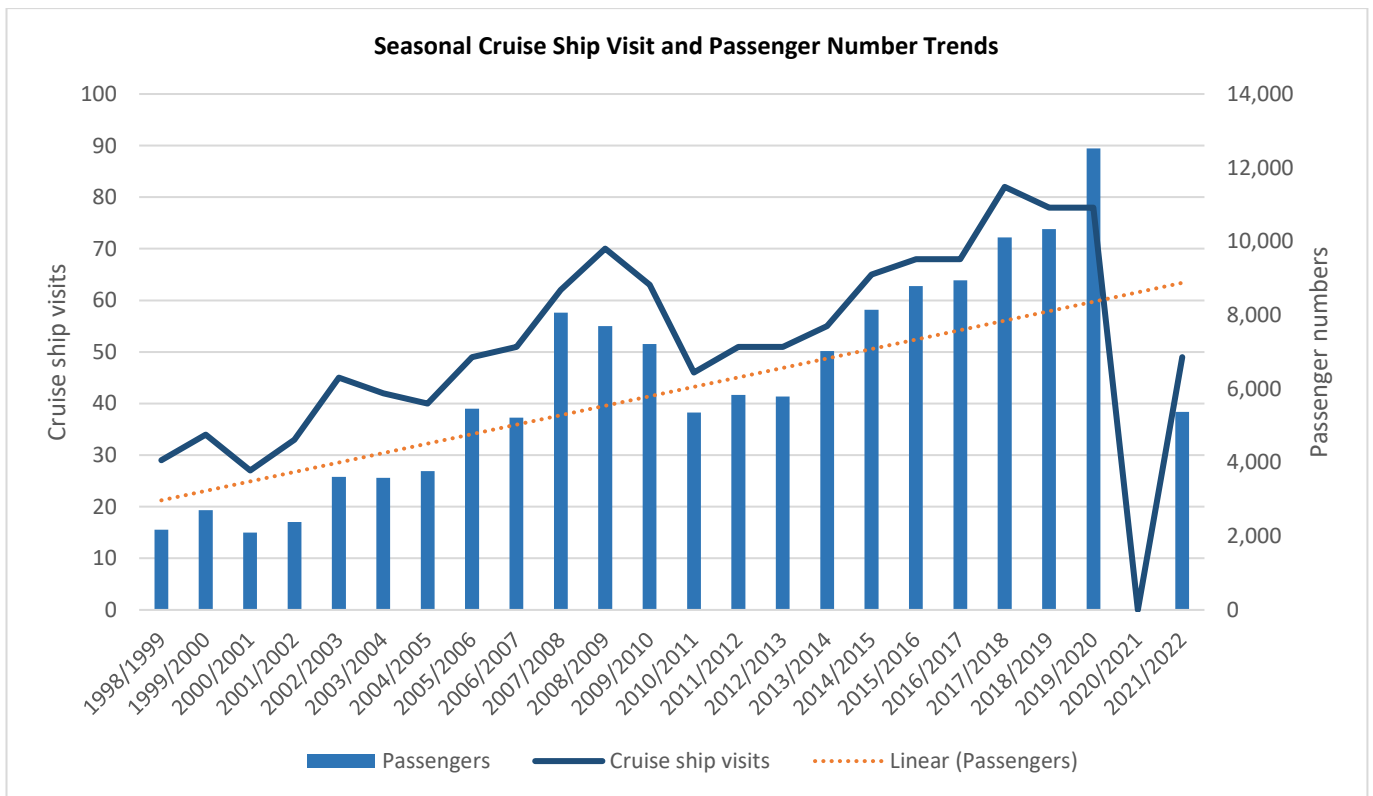


Figure 1: Cruise ship visits and passenger number trends

Passenger Numbers and Cruise Ship Visits

Ocean Victory carried the most passengers over the season, with a total of 469 passengers over three trips. *Hamburg* was the largest capacity ship, with 274 passengers on one visit.

Fram was the only vessel to visit South Georgia on four occasions. Just over half the vessels (14) only visited South Georgia once, while the remaining ships visited two or three times.

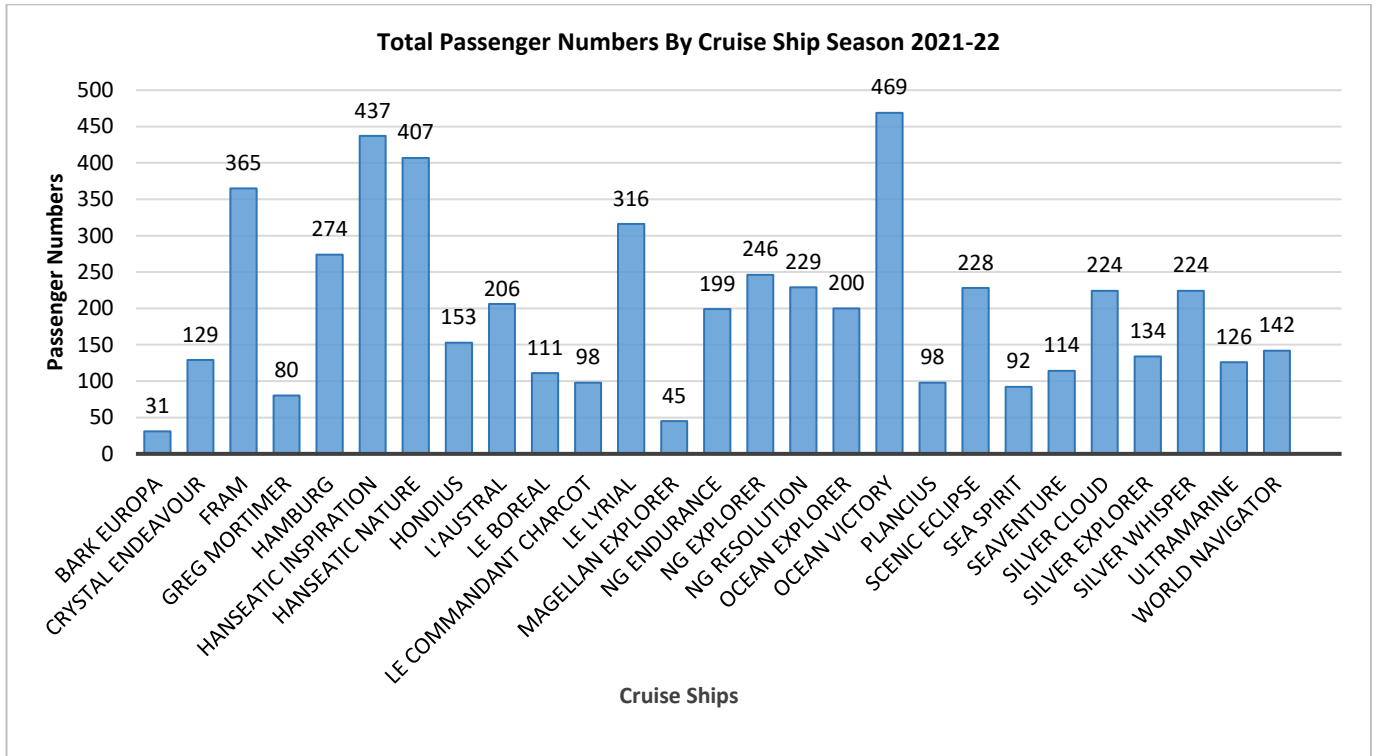


Figure 2: Total Passenger Numbers by Cruise Ship

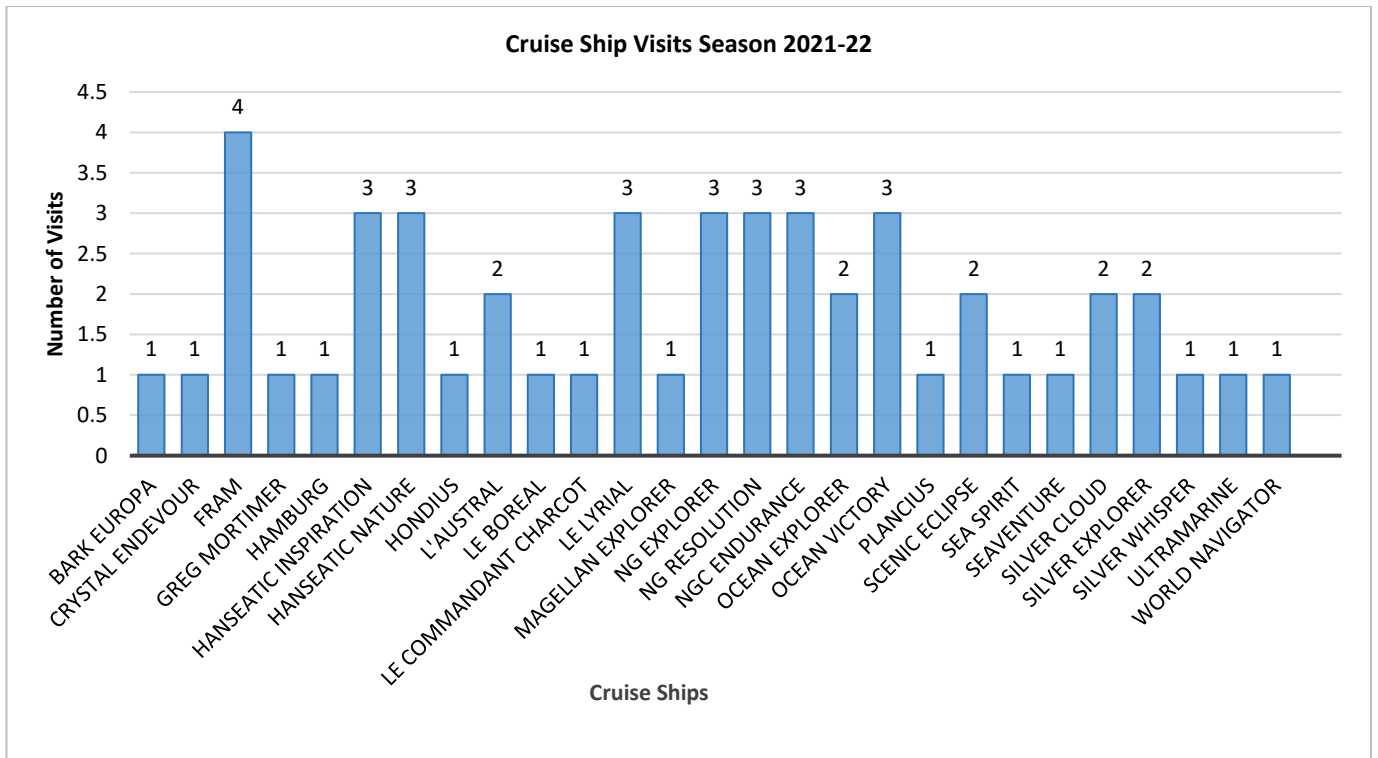


Figure 3: Occurrences of Repeat Cruise Ship Visits

Passenger numbers on visiting vessels

No ships were operating at maximum capacity this season. The majority of the ships (89.3%) were only carrying 50 to 200 passengers, while 9.3% of passengers came on vessels with over 200 passengers and only 1.4% of passengers came on ships carrying less than 50 passengers

Ship Passenger Numbers	Number of Ship Visits	Total number of Passengers	Comments
< 50	2	76	<i>Bark Europa and Magellan Explorer</i>
50 - 100	12	930	
101 - 150	24	2,617	
151 - 200	9	1,253	
201-300	2	498	<i>Silver Whisper and Hamburg</i>
Total	48	5,374	

Table 2. Passenger number on visiting vessel

New Vessels

There were 10 new vessels this season. However, due to COVID-19 mitigation procedures Government Officers were unable to spend time observing these vessels. Of the new vessels, half had no Government Officer boarding at all, due to having a COVID-19 risk rating of Amber or Red.

Passenger Demographics

Cruise ship passengers represented 64 different nationalities, with the top ten nationalities accounting for 92% of the overall passenger numbers. There have been changes in the top ten nationalities, which reflect the different national approaches to the COVID-19 pandemic. China and New Zealand are no longer in the top ten, as both countries introduced strict lockdowns. Austria also fell out of the top ten. Replacing them were Venezuela, the Netherlands and Israel.

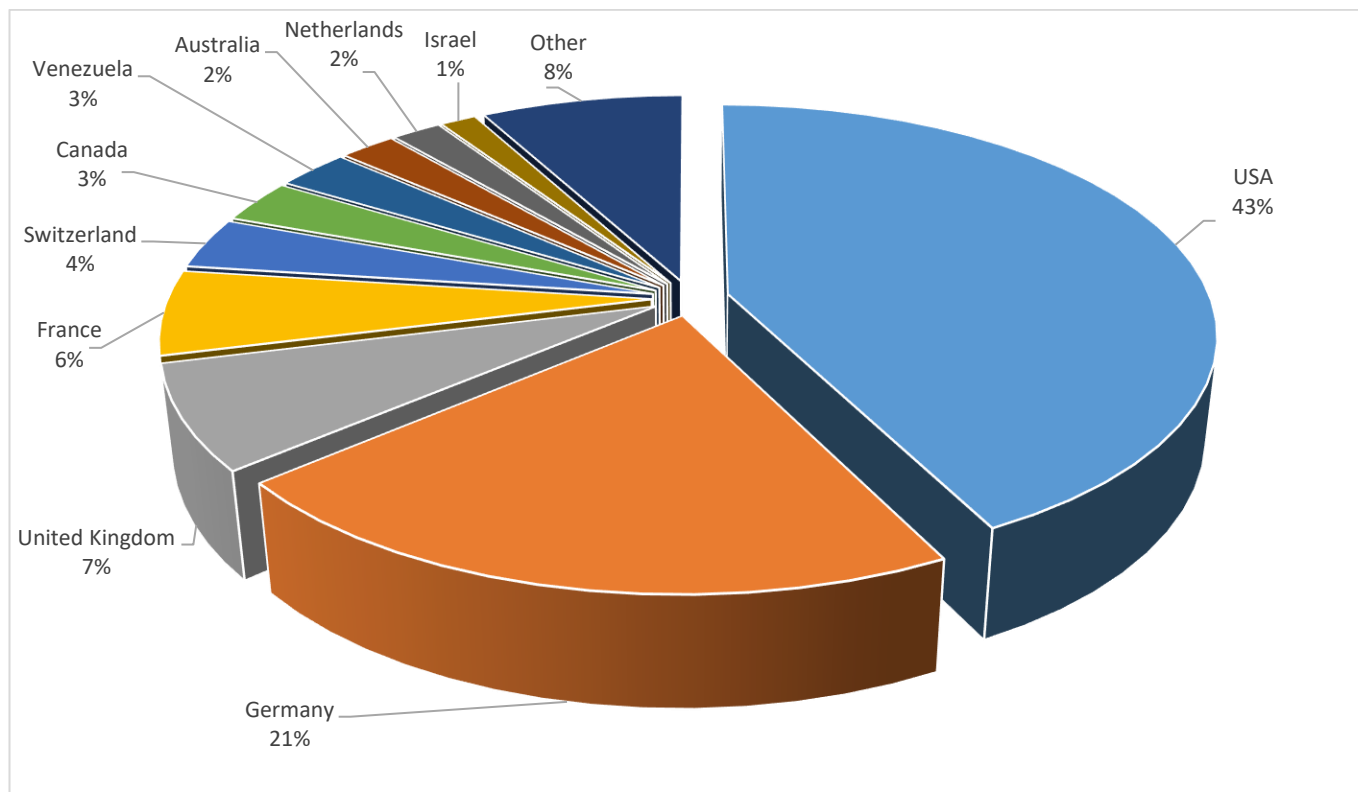


Figure 4: Cruise Ship Passenger Demographics

Country	2021-2022	2019-2020
USA	2,286	2,828
Germany	1,143	2,330
United Kingdom	392	1,155
France	319	838
Switzerland	193	640
Sub Total	4,333	8,757
% share of top 5	80.1%	72%

Table 3: Trend Analysis on Passenger Demographics

Expedition Staff

There were 758 expedition staff from 46 countries, with a higher staff to passenger ratio than normal years, with one staff member to seven passengers. As with passengers, staff demographics reflect the COVID-19 restrictions in different countries. Over 64% of staff came from five countries:

USA	173 staff (23%)	France	64 staff (8%)
Germany	103 staff (14%)	Canada	55 staff (7%)
UK	94 staff (12%)		

Expedition Leader Briefings

All Expedition Leaders now have complete, and pass, an online briefing prior to arrival in South Georgia. Government Officers greeted all EL's on Amber or Green ships either on the ship or on shore at Grytviken, and ensured that they were confident with the information they had received prior to arrival.

Cruise ship Crew

There were 5,689 members of crew of 83 different nationalities. Filipinos accounted for 53% of crew.

Last Cruise ship port prior to arrival in South Georgia

Antarctic ¹	34	Uruguay	1
Argentina	10	Other	1
Chile	3		

First Cruise ship port after leaving South Georgia

Falkland Islands	23	Uruguay	4
Antarctic ²	11	Other	3
Argentina	6	Chile	1

Activities Undertaken

Cruise ships visited 61 visitor sites. The activities undertaken in popular order were small boat landings, boat cruising, ship cruising and extended walks. Boat landings by Zodiac recorded the highest activity number with 19,965 passengers landing at 27 visitor sites.

¹ Antarctic Peninsula or associated Islands

² Antarctic Peninsula or associated Islands

Activity	Number of sites activity carried out	Passengers carrying out activity	Number of times activity carried out at all sites
Small Boat Landing	32	19,965	236
Small Boat Cruising	37	9,973	115
Ship Cruise	31	6,051	55
Extended Walk	19	2,877	48
Kayaking	18	410	33
UAV commercial flight	5	6	8
Scientific Research	6	0	6
Scuba Diving	11	0	21

Table 4: Activities undertaken by cruise ship passengers

Small Boat Landings

This is a proxy for the number of passengers coming ashore at each site each year. This season passengers made 19,965 and crew and staff made 6,019. There were 29 landing sites used, with 236 landings made over the season. The top 10 sites account for 87% of all landings.

	Visitor Site	Visits	Passengers
1	Grytviken	40	3,520
2	Gold Harbour	37	3,254
3	St Andrews Bay	29	2,884
4	Fortuna Bay Whistle Cove Kings	19	1,987
5	Salisbury Plain	20	1,883
6	Stromness	21	1,761
7	Jason Harbour	12	891
8	Right Whale Bay	6	483
9	Fortuna Bay Anchorage Bay	6	444
10	Peggotty Bluff	5	407

Table 5: Summary of the most popular small boat landing sites.

Extended Walks

Extended Walks took place on 48 occasions at 18 sites. The most popular extended walk this season was the Grytviken Walk with 536 passenger taking part.

Site	Number of Visits	Number of Passengers	Numbers including crew, staff & others
Fortuna Bay Shackleton Walk	10	356	468
Grytviken	8	536	749
Maiviken Walk	6	279	351
Gold Harbour	4	380	499
Stromness	4	223	305
Fortuna Bay Whistle Cove Kings	3	279	336
Fortuna Bay Anchorage Bay	2	191	224
Godthul walk	2	48	55
St Andrews Bay	2	255	350
Leith Harbour Walk	1	7	8
Moltke Harbour	1	30	32
Ocean Harbour Walk	1	79	85
Rookery Point Walk	1	26	30
Rosita Harbour	1	24	26
Salisbury Plain	1	146	189
Sorling Valley Hut	1	18	34

Table 6: Extended Walk Information

The Shackleton Walk was the most visited this season, but with only 356 passengers taking part (6.6% of total passenger numbers).

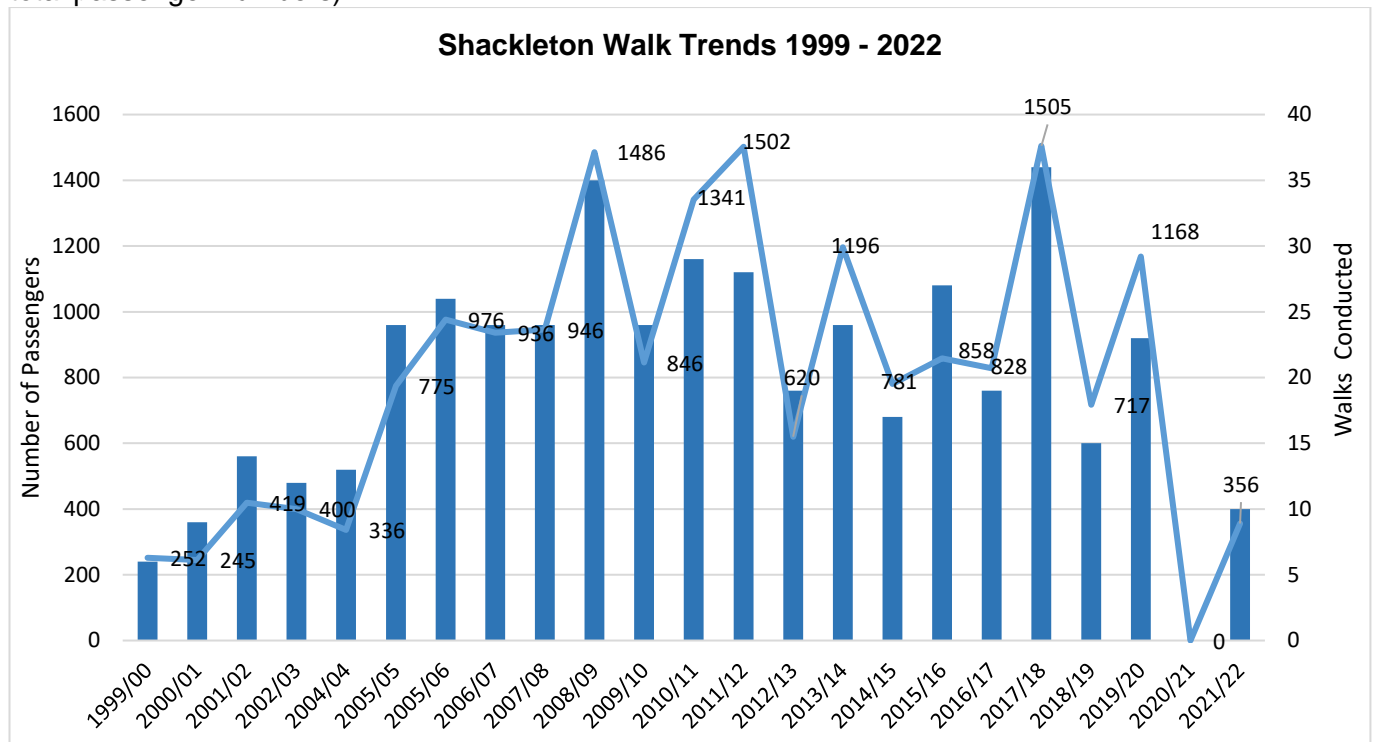


Figure 5: Shackleton Walk Trend

Kayaking

The most popular kayaking sites were Hercules Bay macaroni's (82 passengers) and Stromness (65 passengers).

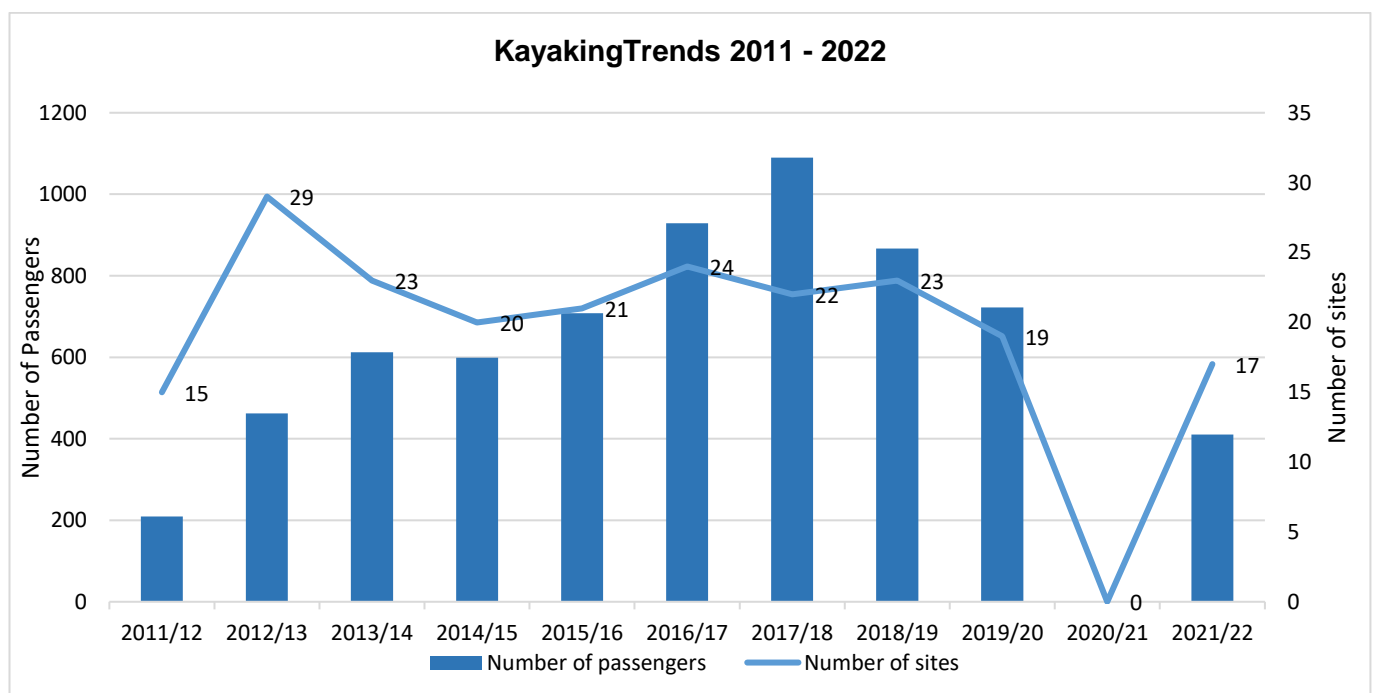


Figure 6: Kayaking Trend

Scuba Diving

No passengers took part in scuba diving this season. Fifty-nine staff and crew from the three National Geographic ships took part in 21 dives over 11 different sites.

Landing Sites of Particular Interest – Prion Island

Due to the condition of the boardwalk at Prion Island, it remained closed to visitors this season.

Landing Sites of Particular Interest – Grytviken

All vessels are required to visit Cumberland East Bay to make customs declarations and complete the biosecurity audit. As described in the COVID-19 regulations section, not all passengers were able to land at Grytviken this season, We welcomed *Le Lyrial* as the first cruise ship of the season on 18th November 2021 with 104 passengers. The last ship was *Greg Mortimer* on 28th March 2022 with 80 passengers.

Grytviken Church

Two organised events were held at the church at Grytviken; a wedding and a Christmas carol concert.

Post Office

The Post Office opened for all Green vessels, operated by the Government Officers in lieu of a Deputy Post Master. The 'Enduring Eye' Hurley Exhibition which includes original lantern slides on loan from the Royal Geographical Society remained open for another season in the Grytviken Post Office display room.

Post Visit Reporting

It is mandatory for each vessel to complete a post visit report. One report was not received, but IAATO was able to share the report the vessel submitted to them.

Medical Assistance

No medical facilities are available on South Georgia for visitors. However, one vessel requested medical assistance.

In order for a passenger to receive medical treatment in Stanley, the passenger was transferred between cruise ships.

One passenger suffered a heart attack and passed away on the Shackleton Hike. The death was reported to the coroner and the cruise ship continued to its disembarkation point in Ushuaia.

One passenger was bitten by a fur seal this season, but no severe injury was reported.

Cruise Ship Bird Strikes

It is mandatory for every vessel to provide details of bird strikes/bird collision with their ship. There were 114 incidences of bird strikes this season of which six were reported dead.

Date Strike Detected	Location	Birds Alive	Birds Dead	Comments
31/01/2022	Stromness Bay	1		Clear weather conditions
01/02/2022	Grytviken	30	0	Heavy fog and rain (fog lights required)
03/02/2022	In transit	2	1	Clear weather conditions
09/02/2022	North-west	1	0	Clear weather conditions
10/02/2022	Royal Bay	1	0	Clear weather conditions
28/02/2022	St Andrews Bay	1	0	Fog
06/03/2022	-	10	1	Fog
09/03/2022	Royal Bay	1		Clear weather conditions
09/03/2022	Cumberland Bay	3		Rain
10/03/2022	-	1	1	
10/03/2022	Cumberland Bay	13	0	Rain
10/03/2022	-	1		

10/03/2022	St Andrews Bay	40		Clear weather conditions
11/03/2022	Fortuna Bay		1	
11/03/2022	Cooper Bay		1	Clear weather conditions
11/03/2022	Gold Harbour		1	Clear weather conditions
12/03/2022	St Andrews Bay	1		Clear weather conditions
13/03/2022	In transit	1		Clear weather conditions
24/03/2022	-	1		
31/01/2022	Stromness Bay	1	0	Clear weather conditions
Total		108	6	

Table 7: Incidental Bird Strike

Biosecurity Audit

On Green vessels, Government Officers boarded and completed the biosecurity audit as normal. However, Amber and Red vessels were asked to conduct the enhanced biosecurity checks and report their findings. Several of the vessels conducting self-audits reported biosecurity risks, suggesting that they were conducting them thoroughly and reporting honestly.

Government Officers completed biosecurity audits on 25 cruise ship visits this season, checking 908 passengers boots, bags and clothing. Self-audits were undertaken on 23 visits, checking 1,124 passengers for biosecurity risks. One vessel undertook a self-audit, but due to internet issues they were not able send their report.

Eleven of the 27 cruise ships were not boarded at all by Government Officers, despite four of them making more than one visit, due to Amber or Red COVID-19 ratings.

From the total of 2,032 checks, 3.5% had biosecurity failures, a decrease from 4.5% the previous cruise ship season (2019-20). Only one vessel had a pass rate of less than 85%, which is considered unacceptable. However, on subsequent visits their pass rate was much improved.

Overall, crew, expedition staff and passengers all appeared very on board with the biosecurity message. Passengers were very tolerant of the biosecurity audit checks, despite the time it took with only one Government Officer conducting them.

Part 3: Yachts

There were seven yacht visits, by six different yachts. Fifty-four people came to South Georgia via yacht; 25 passengers and 29 crew.

Yacht	Operator	Arrival Date	No. of Visits	PAX	Crew	Staff	Other	Total
<i>Peregrine</i>	Leiv Poncet	07/01/2022	1	0	1	0	0	1
<i>S/V Australis</i>	Ocean Expeditions LLC	18/08/2021	1	4	3	0	0	7
<i>S/V Australis</i>	Ocean Expeditions LLC	30/10/2021	1	4	3	0	0	7
<i>Santa Maria Australis</i>	SIM Expeditions	03/11/2021	1	4	3	0	0	7
<i>Selma Expeditions</i>	Selma Expeditions	22/11/2021	1	4	4	0	0	8
<i>TARA</i>	Foundation Tara Ocean	15/03/2022	1	0	12	0	0	12
<i>Vinson of Antarctica</i>	Pelagic Expeditions LTD	12/01/2022	1	9	3	0	0	12
Total			7	25	29	0	0	54

Table 8: Yacht Visits

Yacht Landing Sites.

Yachts conducted beach landings at 22 visitor sites during this season, with 912 people landed ashore.

Part 4: Expeditions

There were no expeditions this season.

Part 5: Other Vessel Visits

Vessel Name	Organisation	Dates	Comments
<i>HMS Forth</i>	UK Military - Royal Navy	24/10/21 to 26/10/21	South Atlantic Patrol
<i>HMS Forth</i>	UK Military - Royal Navy	28/10/21 to 30/10/21	South Atlantic Patrol
<i>HMS Protector</i>	UK Military - Royal Navy	04/12/21 to 06/12/21	South Atlantic Patrol
<i>SA Agulhas II</i>	South African Research Vessel	11/03/22 to 11/03/22	Visit after discovering the wreck of <i>Endurance</i>
<i>HMS Forth</i>	UK Military - Royal Navy	18/03/22 to 20/03/22	South Atlantic Patrol
<i>RRS Sir David Attenborough</i>	British Antarctic Survey	20/03/22 to 24/03/22	Cargo and passengers. The new BAS vessels first visit to South Georgia

Table 9: Other visiting vessels

Annex 1 – Total Cruise Ship Passenger, Crew and Staff Nationality

Country	Passengers	Staff	Crew	Other	Total
Totals	5374	759	5678	7	11818
Albania	0	0	4	0	4
Argentina	5	43	17	0	65
Australia	118	28	2	0	148
Austria	59	5	48	0	112
Belarus	4	0	6	0	10
Belgium	33	1	4	0	38
Belize	1	0	0	0	1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	0	11	0	11
Brazil	7	6	26	0	39
Bulgaria	1	0	39	0	40
Canada	164	55	18	0	237
Chile	20	17	10	0	47
China	10	6	6	0	22
Colombia	3	1	25	2	31
Costa Rica	1	4	4	0	9
Croatia	0	2	65	0	67
Cyprus	2	0	2	0	4
Czech Republic	6	1	0	0	7
Denmark	32	13	0	0	45
Ecuador	2	3	10	0	15
Egypt	0	0	1	0	1
El Salvador	0	0	2	0	2
Estonia	0	0	1	0	1
Finland	19	2	10	0	31
France	319	64	335	1	719
Gabon	0	0	1	0	1
Georgia	1	0	4	0	5
Germany	1143	103	268	0	1514
Ghana	0	0	1	0	1
Greece	3	0	11	0	14
Guatemala	1	1	10	0	12
Guyana	1	0	1	0	2
Honduras	0	0	78	0	78
Hong Kong	1	0	0	0	1
Hungary	1	0	9	0	10
Iceland	1	3	0	0	4
India	17	1	228	0	246
Indonesia	0	2	246	0	248
Ireland	11	11	4	0	26
Israel	76	0	0	0	76
Italy	33	6	49	0	88

(Continued) Country	Passengers	Staff	Crew	Other	Total
Jamaica	0	0	5	0	5
Japan	3	1	6	0	10
Kazakhstan	1	0	1	0	2
Kenya	0	0	3	0	3
Kyrgyzstan	0	0	8	0	8
Latvia	0	1	7	0	8
Lithuania	4	2	3	0	9
Luxembourg	5	0	0	0	5
Macedonia	0	0	7	0	7
Malaysia	0	0	2	0	2
Maldives	1	0	0	0	1
Malta	2	0	0	0	2
Mauritius	0	1	17	0	18
Mexico	23	1	13	0	37
Monaco	2	0	0	0	2
Montenegro	0	0	18	0	18
Morocco	0	0	2	0	2
Myanmar	0	0	4	0	4
Nepal	0	0	1	0	1
Netherlands	104	10	19	0	133
New Zealand	5	11	4	2	22
Nicaragua	0	0	10	0	10
Nigeria	0	0	1	0	1
Norway	31	20	23	0	74
Panama	1	0	3	0	4
Paraguay	0	0	12	0	12
Peru	2	1	22	0	25
Philippines	1	0	3056	0	3057
Poland	8	1	38	0	47
Portugal	3	1	28	0	32
Qatar	1	0	0	0	1
Romania	1	1	177	0	179
Russia	10	9	31	0	50
Rwanda	0	0	2	0	2
Serbia	0	0	61	0	61
Singapore	2	1	0	0	3
Slovakia	1	0	3	0	4
South Africa	1	24	45	0	70
South Korea	1	0	0	0	1
Spain	13	8	13	0	34
Sri Lanka	0	0	2	0	2
Sweden	18	11	41	0	70
Switzerland	193	1	14	0	208
Taiwan	0	5	0	0	5

(Continued) Country	Passengers	Staff	Crew	Other	Total
Tanzania	0	0	1	0	1
Thailand	1	0	3	0	4
Trinidad and Tobago	0	2	0	0	2
Tunisia	0	0	12	0	12
Turkey	0	0	45	0	45
Uganda	0	0	2	0	2
Ukraine	8	0	262	0	270
United Arab Emirates	1	0	0	0	1
United Kingdom	392	94	52	2	540
Uruguay	1	2	1	0	4
USA	2286	173	37	0	2496
Uzbekistan	0	0	2	0	2
Venezuela	153	0	3	0	156

Annex 2 – Yacht Passenger Demographics

Country	Passengers	Staff	Crew	Other	Total
Argentina	0	0	1	0	1
Australia	1	0	2	0	3
Canada	2	0	0	0	2
Czech Republic	1	0	0	0	1
Falkland Islands	0	0	1	0	1
France	0	0	8	0	8
Germany	1	0	4	0	5
Ireland	1	0	0	0	1
Italy	0	0	2	0	2
Poland	0	0	4	0	4
Spain	0	0	1	0	1
Switzerland	0	0	1	0	1
United Kingdom	13	0	3	0	16
USA	6	0	2	0	8
Totals	25	0	29	0	54