

**GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH GEORGIA &
THE SOUTH SANDWICH ISLANDS**



ANNUAL VISITOR REPORT

July 2024 - June 2025

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Introduction

This report covers the period from July 2024 to June 2025. This season saw 40 expedition cruise ships make 110 visits, and 7 yachts make 8 visits to South Georgia. A total of 15,853 passengers visited, and including all staff and crew on both cruise ships and yachts there was an overall total of 30,037 visitors.

Visits from tourism vessels spanned from September until the end of March. There were 5 new operators and 3 new vessels operating within the Territory.

All vessels who visited South Georgia were in possession of a Visitor Permit.

Cruise Ship Seasonal Trends

This season saw an increase in visit numbers and passenger numbers, with 10 more expedition cruise ship visits than the previous season, and over 1,000 more passengers visiting this season.

Table 1: Summary of cruise ship visitor numbers

Season	Voyages	Passengers	Staff	Crew	Others	Total
2011/12	51	5,831	578	3,569	6	9,984
2012/13	51	5,792	612	3,552	24	9,980
2013/14	55	7,024	667	4,080	21	11,792
2014/15	65	8,142	827	4,837	23	13,829
2015/16	68	8,787	915	5,549	13	15,264
2016/17	68	8,946	890	5,459	11	15,303
2017/18	82	10,109	1,089	6,498	24	17,720
2018/19	78	10,337	1,110	6,550	21	18,018
2019/20	78	12,521	1,222	8,468	33	22,244
2020/21	0	0	0	0	0	0
2021/22	49	5,374	759	5,689	7	11,829
2022/23	103	13,721	1,690	10,771	23	26,205
2023/24	100	14,594	1,712	11,229	30	27,565
2024/25	110	15,816	1,812	12,300	27	29,955

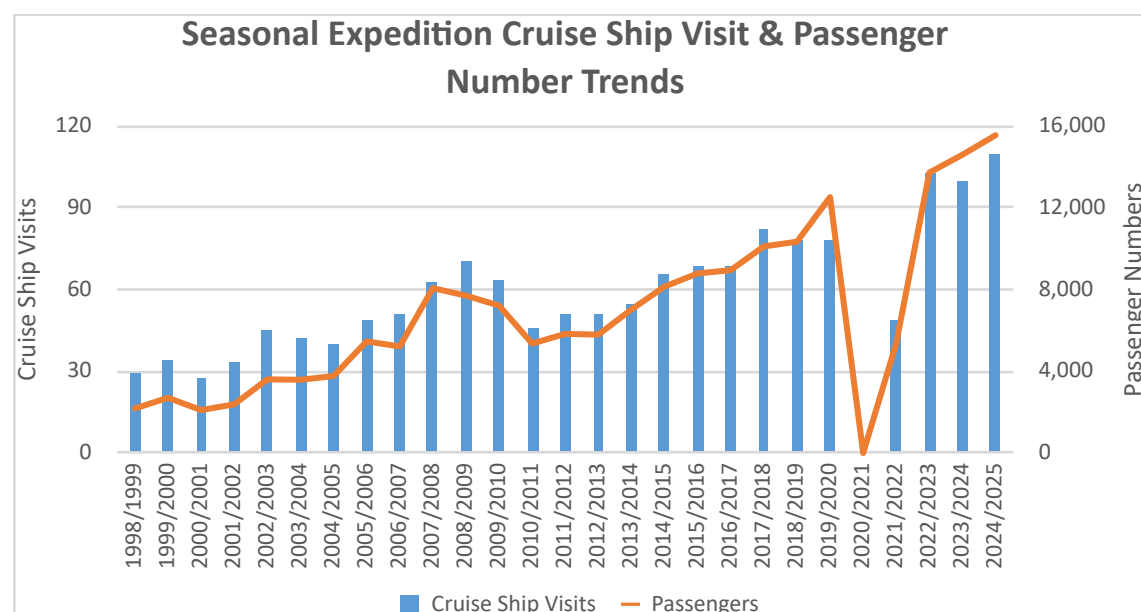


Figure 1: Expedition cruise ship visits & passenger number trends

Passenger Numbers on Expedition Cruise Vessels

The majority of visits were made by IAATO Category 1 vessels carrying fewer than 200 passengers. There were no visits from cruise only vessels carrying 500 or more passengers.

Table 2: Visits and passenger numbers by IAATO Category of vessel.

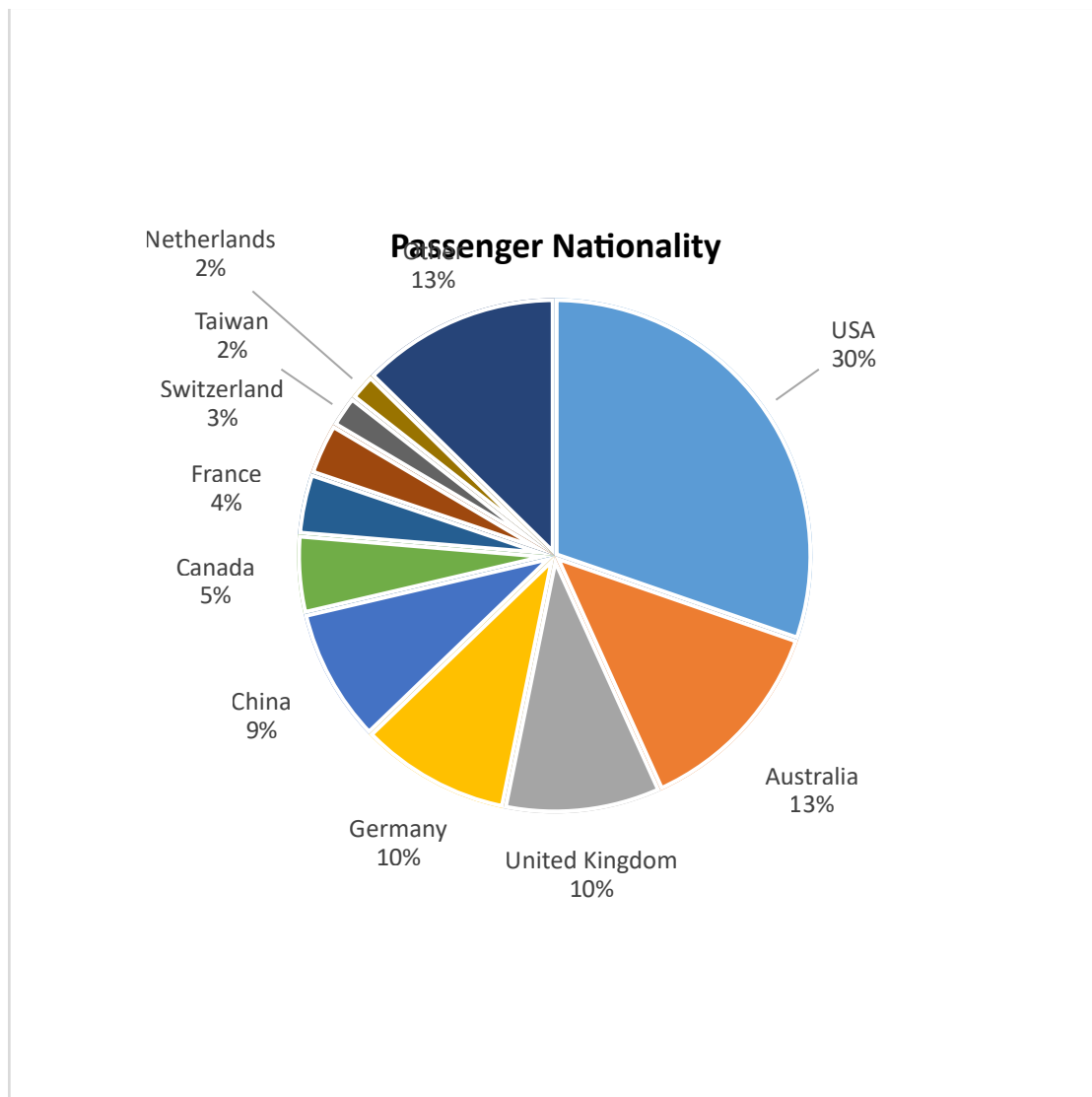
IAATO Category	Number of Visits		Number of Passengers	
Cat 1: 1-199 passengers	92	(83.6%)	11,574	(73.2%)
Cat 2: 200-499 passengers	18	(16.4%)	4,242	(26.8%)
Cr: 500+ passengers	0	(0%)	0	(0%)

Passenger Nationality

Passengers on expedition cruise ships represented 85 different nationalities this season, with 87% of passengers (13,812 of the total 15,816) coming from one of the top 10 nationalities. The top 5 nationalities remained the same as last season, but with a slight change in the order. Passenger numbers increased from all of the countries in the top 5 except for Germany which saw a decrease.

Table 3: Top 5 Expedition cruise vessel passenger nationality

Country	2024-2025	2023-2024	2022-2023	2021-2022	2019-2020
USA	4,792	4,687	4,310	2,286	2,828
Australia	2,048	1,892	1,509	Not in top 5	1,606
United Kingdom	1,572	1,515	1,644	392	1,155
Germany	1,522	1,708	2,230	1,143	2,330
China	1,351	1,014	Not in top 5	Not in top 5	Not in top 5
Total Passengers	15,816	14,594	13,721	5,374	12,521



Figure

2: Expedition cruise vessel passenger nationality

Landing Sites

After Grytviken, the most popular landing sites were St Andrews Bay, with 80 landings; Fortuna Bay with 58 landings, Gold Harbour with 48 landings, and Salisbury Plain with 42 landings.

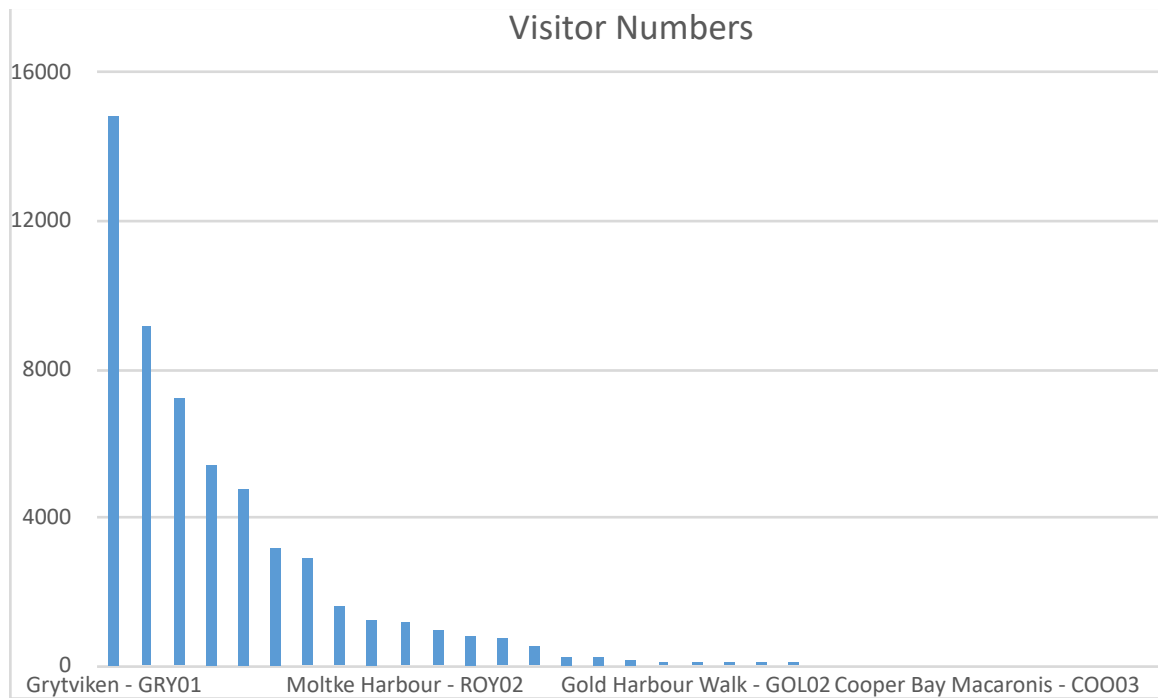


Figure 3: Most visited landing sites.

HPAI

This was the second season that HPAI affected South Georgia. No sites were closed by GSGSSI this season, with the decision being down to expedition leaders as to whether it was possible to land following observations of the landing site. 19 landings were aborted due to being unable to maintain separation from animals that were potentially HPAI positive.

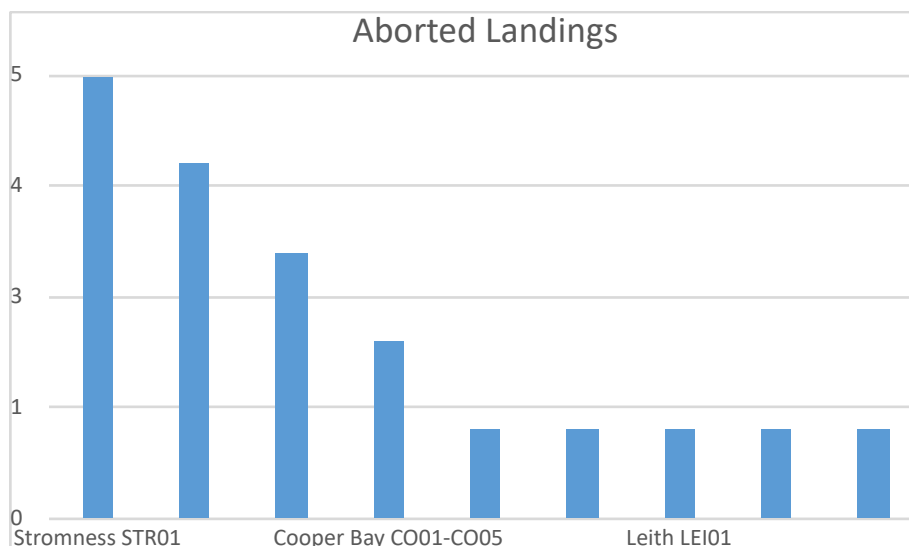


Figure 4: Aborted landings in 2024-2025

Incidents

Throughout the season, a number of incidents occurred highlighting the need to be self-sufficient in South Georgia. Of particular note were:

Passengers in the water

A number of incidents involving passengers and crew in the water were noted. In all instances individuals were immediately pulled out of the water and assessed by a medical professional. All casualties were noted as being well and safe following the incident.

Vessel Striking Ice

A cruise ship struck ice in the area of Gold Harbour, causing damage to one of the stabilisers and water ingress. No persons were harmed and the vessel returned safely to Ushuaia.

Vessel Striking Object

One vessel made a distress call following contact with a foreign object at Shag Rocks, which caused water ingress to the stabiliser compartments. Two vessels responded to the distress call and prepared to assist in an evacuation. But the distress call was cancelled after a couple of hours when the situation was considered safe. The vessel was able to continue to South Georgia as planned and continue landings, before returning to Ushuaia. No persons were harmed.

EPIRB Activation

A number of EPIRB activations were noted within the zone throughout the season. These were all investigated and found to be accidental set-offs and no vessels were in distress.

Grytviken Visits

Visits to Grytviken are mandatory, with vessels being required to visit to make customs declarations and complete mandatory biosecurity audits. During the Grytviken visits, the government officers ran through permit conditions with expedition leaders, and discussed any observations from other sites, e.g. whether sites appeared to have been impacted by HPAI or whether any landings had been aborted.

The first vessel to visit Grytviken was the yacht *Vinson of Antarctica* on 13th September 2024 with 4 passengers. The first expedition ship to visit was *Magellan Explorer* on 30th September 2024 with 90 passengers. The final vessel to visit was *Hondius* on 28th March 2025.

Grytviken Church

The church was open for all visitors throughout the season, with one wedding taking place and four services being held.

Main Store

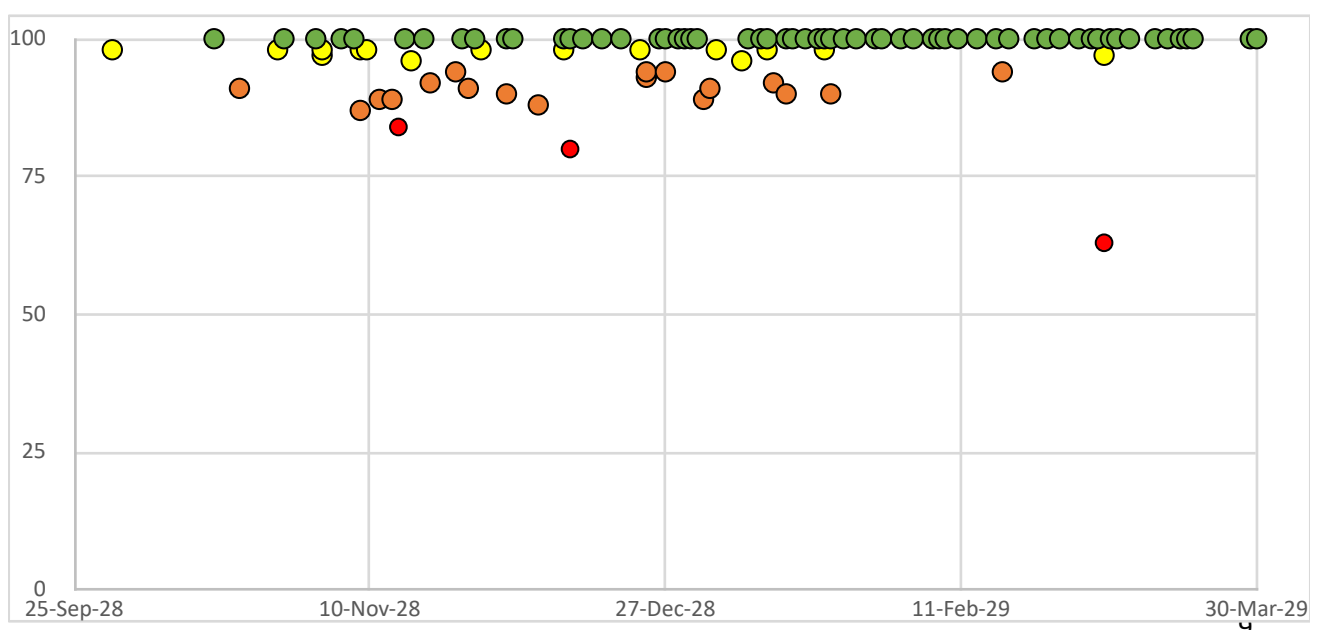
The Main Store at Grytviken was opened part way through the season and access was offered to all expedition cruises, subject to constant supervision by an expedition team member.

Post Office

The Post Office opened for all vessels throughout the season manned by two post officers and the government officers where necessary . The 'Enduring Eye' Hurley Exhibition which was in the display room closed permanently towards the end of the season.

Biosecurity Audits

A total of 3,052 passengers were checked in the biosecurity audits at King Edward Cove with a mean pass rate of 97.5%. 97 identifiable risks were found; 18 from boots and 79 on clothing, backpacks and equipment. Vessels were subjected to a comprehensive audit on their first visit of the season, scoring over 95% meant they could have a basic audit during subsequent visits. Vessels scoring below 95% were required to go back to a comprehensive



audit for the next visit. (Full details are available in the South Georgia Biosecurity annual review for 2024/25)

Figure 5: Biosecurity audit results