

VISITORS



STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

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1. Background

South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands has no permanent human population. Everyone entering the Territory is therefore considered a visitor and has a responsibility to protect the environment for future generations.

2. Scope and application

This SOP applies to **all visitors**, irrespective of their role or reason for travel, including but not limited to:

- Tourists
- Expedition staff and leaders
- Scientists and media personnel
- Government staff
- HM Armed Forces personnel

All visitors must meet the biosecurity obligations set out in this SOP.

3. General requirements

To ensure understanding of biosecurity risks and controls:

- All visitors must receive an appropriate biosecurity briefing from their trip organiser.
- All visitors must watch the official GSGSSI visitor briefing film before arrival in the Territories.

Only in exceptional circumstances may a briefing be conducted on arrival by a Government officer. In such cases, visitors must proceed directly to King Edward Point / Grytviken and contact Government officers as soon as possible.

4. Packing guidelines for personal baggage

Visitors must ensure that personal baggage, clothing and equipment are free from organic material and contaminants before travel.



4.1 Purchasing considerations

Where possible:

- Use new clothing and equipment
- Choose clothing without Velcro, mesh or webbing
- Select boots with open treads that are easy to clean
- Avoid knitted gloves; use smooth, waterproof alternatives
- Choose bags with smooth fabrics rather than mesh panels

4.2 Packing and storage

Make sure all clothing and equipment, is clean and free from organic material before it is packed. Pay particular attention to seams, pockets, fastenings and Velcro. Thoroughly clean day packs, camera bags, tripods and walking sticks

After packing, keep bags closed and stored in a clean indoor area, off the ground. Avoid storing baggage in sheds, garages or other areas where rodents or invertebrates may enter

Prohibited items: Fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, eggs, and unpasteurised dairy products must not be brought to SGSSI for personal consumption. Poultry products are of particular concern.

5. Pre-border biosecurity checks

As visitors may travel through multiple locations prior to arrival on SGSSI, after leaving the last port outside the Territories, but before making their first landing, all visitors must thoroughly check all their clothing and equipment to ensure it is free from:

- Soil, dirt or sediment
- Seeds or plant material
- Animal material (e.g. fur, feathers, faeces)
- Invertebrates
- Animal damage (e.g. gnaw marks)

Masters, skippers and/or Expedition Leaders must ensure that:

- All luggage and equipment intended to go ashore is thoroughly inspected and cleaned
- Particular attention is paid to boots, Velcro, gaiters, jacket hoods, trousers and pockets
- Daypacks and camera bags are brushed and vacuumed to remove organic material



6. Going ashore

6.1 Boot washing and inspections

- Boot washing is mandatory before going ashore and again on return to the vessel for every landing.
- Footwear must be scrubbed clean and dipped in an approved biocide (e.g. Virkon S), used according to manufacturer instructions.
- Masters, Skippers and/or Expedition Leaders must ensure adequate supplies of biocide are available.
- Inspections must be overseen by a competent member of the visit team.

Government officers may inspect boot-washing facilities, procedures, vessels, staff and passengers prior to disembarkation.

6.2 Conduct when ashore

All visitors must comply with the following standard biosecurity measures, which are always in place within South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands:

- Prior to landing in areas of high wildlife density, a period of observation must be undertaken to check for signs of disease or unusually high mortality.
- Boats and tenders must be inspected for rodents, invertebrates and organic material before embarking passengers and again before departing the shore.
- All biological material must be removed from boots and outer clothing. Non-porous surfaces must be treated with an appropriate biocide (e.g. Virkon S, Bioguard, or soap followed by 3.5% bleach). This must be carried out before arrival in the Territory and between every site.
- Clothing or equipment that cannot be adequately cleaned must **not** be brought into the Territory.
- A minimum separation distance of at least 5 metres must be maintained from all wildlife and carcasses unless a specific Regulated Activity Permit (RAP) authorises a closer approach. Landings must be aborted if visitors cannot maintain a minimum distance of 5 metres from wildlife or carcasses.
- A greater separation distance of up to 10 metres is recommended where animals show visible signs of illness
- Dead wildlife must not be touched, and no collections may be made, unless authorised under a RAP.
- Bags must not be left open or unattended ashore.
- Visitors must not sit, kneel, or lie on the ground. At coastal locations, crouching should also be avoided as it increases risk of harmful interactions with fur seals.
- Equipment should not be placed on the ground unless unavoidable or in a designated clean area.



- Fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, eggs and unpasteurised dairy products must not be taken ashore.
- Any permitted food items taken ashore must be carried in robust, fully sealed containers made of plastic/ metal.
- After visiting areas with wildlife, good hand hygiene should be practiced using alcohol hand sanitiser or washing with soap and water.

7. Checks between sites

Movement between sites presents a risk of spreading non-native species and disease.

- Boot-washing facilities must be cleaned and refreshed between landings.
- All clothing, boots and equipment must be inspected and cleaned between sites
- Boots must be checked after washing to ensure no material remains.
- Walking poles, tripods and monopods must be thoroughly cleaned between each site.
- Visitors should check for invertebrates or rodents after time aboard vessels that are not their usual base.

NOTE: For people who are based at KEP, checks between sites must be logged on the biosecurity database. See SOP for Cargo – KEP.

8. Additional measures for high-risk activities

Activities involving extended time ashore (e.g. science, filming, mountaineering, camping, or personnel based at King Edward Point) carry increased biosecurity risk.

Additional measures include:

- Dry-brushing tents and equipment, with biocide treatment where necessary.
- Cleaning scientific equipment in line with manufacturer guidance, using biocides where equipment has contacted wildlife or soil.

For particularly high-risk projects, a bespoke biosecurity plan may be required and will be identified during the permit application process.

9. The passenger biosecurity audit system

The biosecurity audit is a check undertaken by Government officers, on all vessels in respect of their compliance with biosecurity procedures, or more specifically the effectiveness of the procedures in place to reduce biosecurity risk associated with visitor landings.



The biosecurity audit has been rationalised for the 2026-27 season.

9.1 Principals of the audit system

All vessels visiting South Georgia will be subject to a comprehensive biosecurity audit on their first visit of the season. Those vessels that achieve a successful comprehensive audit will be given 'Trusted Vessel' status and will qualify for a reduced audit for subsequent visits until or unless an audit is failed.

Pax Count	Pax for Comprehensive Audit Checks	Failure (No. of Pax)	Conditional Detection Rate (5%)	Pax for 'Trusted Vessel' Checks	Failure (No. of Pax)
1–12	100%	>1	100%	5	>1
13–30	10	>1	~40%	5	>1
31–60	14	>1	~51%	7	>1
61–120	18	>1	~61%	9	>1
121–200	24	>2	~71%	12	>1
201–300	30	>2	~79%	15	>2
300+	36	>3	~84%	16	>2

Table 1. Passenger count refers to the number of passengers onboard the vessel, which determines the number of passengers that are checked depending on whether the vessel has achieved Trusted Vessel status. Audits are failed if the number of passengers failing their inspection exceeds the numbers in the failure column. Conditional Detection Rate refers to the expected probability of a failure being detected with an assumed non-compliance rate of 5% on all vessels.

The comprehensive passenger inspection regime is designed to achieve approximately 50–80% detection confidence using an assumption of a non-compliance incidence of between 3–5%, while maintaining proportionate inspection effort at higher passenger volumes.

Prior to the shore team disembarking to conduct their initial shore assessment, Government officers will check the biosecurity status of shore stranding kits and the clothing, boots and equipment of 3-5 expedition staff. This activity does not form a part of the passenger audit but does contribute to an overall assessment of operator biosecurity practices and preparedness.

Passenger selection for inspection is random unless otherwise directed by inspectors based on observed risk indicators. All selected passengers are required to present their personal clothing, footwear and equipment intended for shore use. Items are assessed for cleanliness, biological material and compliance with biosecurity requirements.

Inspection outcomes are recorded at the passenger level. Where non-compliance is identified, a passenger is recorded as non-compliant regardless of the number or type of biosecurity issues



detected. This approach reflects that multiple issues identified on a single individual are not statistically independent and therefore are treated as a single inspection outcome.

Where issues are identified, corrective actions may include cleaning, re-inspection, education of passengers, or increased inspection effort on the current or subsequent visits. Inspection levels may be adjusted at any time if biosecurity risk is assessed to have increased.

If a vessel loses 'Trusted Vessel' status, it will be required to complete a comprehensive audit on its next trip. Vessels would also lose any dispensation to land at non-designated visitor sites until such time as the Trusted Vessel status was obtained.

9.2 Statistical basis for determination of comprehensive audit sample size

Sample sizes are determined using a detection probability model based on binomial sampling theory. Assuming a passenger level non-compliance prevalence p , the probability of detecting at least one non-compliant individual in a sample of size n is given by:

$$D = 1 - (1 - p)^n.$$

Rearranging this expression yields the required sample size for a specified target detection probability D :

$$n \geq \ln(1-D) / \ln(1-p)$$

* \ln denotes the natural logarithm (logarithm to base e), where $e \approx 2.71828$. The natural logarithm is used to algebraically invert exponential expressions when solving for sample size in probabilistic detection models.

9.2.1 Statistical basis for passenger sampling and detection thresholds

The sampling framework presented in Table 1 is derived from binomial probability theory, assuming a constant underlying passenger level non-compliance prevalence of 5% across vessels.

For a given passenger population size N , a fixed sample of n passengers is inspected, and the probability of detecting at least one non-compliant passenger is calculated as:

$$1 - (1 - p)^n, \text{ where } p = 0.05$$

This value is reported as the 'Conditional Detection Rate' and represents the likelihood of identifying non-compliance, conditional upon its presence within the passenger cohort at a rate of 5%.

Sample sizes increase non-linearly with passenger numbers to maintain progressively higher detection probabilities as vessel size increases, reaching approximately 84% for vessels carrying more than 300 passengers. For vessels with passenger numbers ≤ 12 , a census approach (100% inspection) is applied, yielding a detection probability of 100%.



9.2.4 Trusted Vessel Status

Trusted Vessel sampling regimes apply reduced sample sizes reflecting an adjusted risk profile, while still maintaining a non-trivial probability of detection under the same prevalence assumption.

9.2.5 Failure Rates

Audit failure thresholds are set to allow a limited number of individual failures before triggering a failed audit outcome, thereby accommodating stochastic variation and isolated non-compliance events while retaining statistical sensitivity to systematic non-compliance or elevated biosecurity risk.

