

Update on *Kaptian Khlebnikov* in Antarctica's Weddell Sea

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For Immediate Release...

November 16, 2009, Ushuaia, Argentina. *Kaptian Khlebnikov's* scheduled return to port in Ushuaia, Argentina today, November 16, 2009, has been delayed due to weather and heavy pack ice conditions in the Weddell Sea.

The vessel, a Russian registered icebreaker (Russian Ice Class: *KM*LL3A2 – icebreaker*), has been operated by Quark Expeditions in the Antarctic since 1992. The current voyage is a specialized departure to visit the emperor penguin colony near Snow Hill Island. It is usual during these trips to lodge the ship in the ice near the colony and, following ATCM XXVII Resolution 2 (2004) Guidelines for the operation of aircraft near concentrations of birds in Antarctica, transport the passengers by helicopter and then on foot to visit the emperor penguin colony. On this occasion, however, once in position bad weather caused the sea-ice to compress around the ship making it difficult for the vessel to maneuver effectively. The vessel's command is waiting for weather conditions to improve before beginning the transit north. There is no immediate danger and all on board are safe and well.

Onboard there are 101 passengers, 23 staff and 60 crew. Nationalities comprise:

58 Russian
51 United Kingdom
13 USA
8 Austria
7 France
7 Canada
7 Netherlands
5 Germany
5 Ukraine
4 Mexico
4 Australia
3 Italy
3 New Zealand
2 Ireland
1 Moldova
1 Thailand
1 Argentina
1 Denmark
1 China
1 Sweden

1 Norway

more...

Quark Expeditions reports that despite the iced-in conditions, passengers were able to visit Snow Hill yesterday, participating in helicopter excursions to observe seals and Emperor penguins. Quark is taking care of flight re-arrangements and alternative plans for both the passengers currently onboard and those due to join the vessel today.

All Quark vessels, including *Kapitan Khlebnikov*, participate in the IAATO vessel-tracking scheme that the MRCC's have full access to. MRCC Argentina (currently responsible for SAR in the Peninsula region under the PANC agreement) has informally been alerted to the situation as a courtesy. However, no assistance is being requested, nor is likely to be required.

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IAATO is a member organization founded in 1991 to advocate, promote and practice safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic. IAATO currently has 109 members worldwide. Members work together to develop, adopt and implement operational standards that mitigate potential environmental impacts. Numerous operating procedures and guidelines have been adopted over the last 19 years that have proven to be successful methods for avoiding impacts, including site-specific guidelines, site selection criteria, passengers-to-staff ratios, limiting numbers of passengers ashore, boot-washing guidelines and the prevention of the transmission of alien organisms, wilderness etiquette, garbage policy, ship scheduling and vessel communications procedures, emergency medical evacuation procedures, emergency contingency plans, reporting procedures, marine wildlife watching guides, station visitation policies and more.

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