

Small Vessels amid COVID-19: Guidelines - **DRAFT**

This document is a draft distributed for global review from 08 to 12 July 2020. It is not ready for use. The text of this document will be reviewed, improved, formatted, and designed and it is expected to be published 21st of July. If you have comments and suggestion use the review template provided at:

<https://www.adventuretravel.biz/covid19guidelines-review/>

We're on a Team

The COVID-19 pandemic has entered a new phase, travel is restarting, and travelers want to travel, and companies want to operate while minimizing COVID-19 contamination risk. ATTA Activity Guidelines for Adventure Travel have been developed jointly by ATTA, Cleveland Clinic, and a cohort of operators.

The **Small Vessel Cruising amid COVID-19: Guidelines** were designed to be used together with [Adventure Travel COVID-19 Health & Safety Guidelines](#)

While the current knowledge (June 2020) indicates that the risk of the coronavirus being passed on to others outdoors is reduced when people maintain social distancing, operating under these Guidelines should only be undertaken after thorough risk and safety assessment and compliance with existing destination government guidance.

These guidelines are intended to be a flexible framework for ATC's (adventure travel companies) to use in reopening. Companies should tailor their actual policies and practices based on their unique operations, applicable laws, regulations, and health standards in their locales, and consult with their own legal, safety, and financial advisors to develop a reopening guide for their situation.

These guidelines are not intended to be an exhaustive list of possible actions nor are they meant to encourage ATC's to resume operations before they are ready to do so. These guidelines are designed to be used as a supplement to ATC's current risk and crisis management plans, operating procedures and protocols, legal documents (e.g., terms and conditions and liability waiver), and customer trip materials – not as a substitute.

Note: This is a living document. As international and national restrictions and Public Health guidelines evolve, this document will also evolve to reflect new advice and changes to guidelines when they emerge. Guidelines have been developed in line with the most recent information coming from international and national sources related to health, tourism and outdoors activities. We welcome you feedback any time: covid19guidelinesreview@adventure.travel

Disclaimer: The information contained within these operational guidelines may change from time to time due to the evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic. It must not by itself be relied upon in determining obligations or other decisions. Users of this document must independently verify any information on which they wish to rely. It is expected that all business owners and management will have familiarized themselves with governmental, health authority, and regulatory guidance prior to re-opening and will have implemented all relevant requirements. Adventure Travel Trade Association does not assume, and expressly disclaims, any legal or other liability for any inaccuracy, mistake, misstatement, or any other error of whatsoever nature contained herein. The information accessible in this document has been compiled from many sources that are not controlled by Adventure Travel Trade Association. While reasonable care has been taken in the compilation and publication of the contents of this document, Adventure Travel Trade Association

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Small Vessel Cruising

Small vessel cruising can provide intimate tours in small groups, close to nature and far away from higher risk COVID-19 areas. On the other hand, they usually involve sharing limited spaces, high traffic areas and in some cases food and lodging, all of which have specific risk factors.

From a regulatory point of view, the US Coast Guard (USCG) and the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) define small vessels as ships less than 100 tonnage. The CDC has established "no-sail" Guidance for ships over 250 passengers. When considering COVID-19 risks, it is important to keep in mind that distancing is directly related to group sizes and ability to disperse.

1. Group Management

- a. In small vessels, social distancing can be achieved by limiting to small groups, FIT, or household units. In vessels where it is not practical to have small or contained groups, strive to keep trip participant numbers as low as reasonably possible and consider other ways to promote distancing, such as not filling the boat to capacity.
- b. Physical distancing does not need to apply to household units.
- c. Physical distancing should be practiced as much as possible if the group involves more than one household unit. How each individual moves about throughout the experience will greatly influence your group's distancing practices - operators should promote the shared responsibility for distancing.
 - i. The distribution of passengers and activities in a vessel should also be adapted as much as possible to promote distancing. For example, providing 'household unit' accommodations, staggered scheduling of mealtimes or events, and offering on-board activities at reduced and spaced capacity to promote distancing are all viable adaptations.
- d. Consider offering the possibility of private trips or private boats for people who prefer not to intermingle with other guests.
- e. Consider using face coverings when in situations of higher risk of virus transmission. Examples include group activities, wildlife sightings, on-board briefings, or other times that involve close proximity or movement on the vessel.
- f. Special attention should be given to the crew, their level of exposure, sanitation, and distancing. In many cases, crews are the link between clients that are consistently practicing distancing, for example, when serving food, cleaning common areas, operating dinghies, assisting with boarding, or leading side activities.
 - i. Consider decreasing crew circulation, assigning crews for specific stations, and the living quarters for crew when not at work.

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- ii. Consider whether or not frontline crew or crew in areas of higher risk should have masks at all times.
- iii. Consult ATTA's other activity guidelines for more information on specific activities.

2. Pre-Arrival and embarkation

- a. Have screening procedures in place. Before joining an activity or experience ask guests to self-assess their physical condition and self-screen their risk profile. Inform guests that if they have symptoms, however mild, or are in a household where someone has symptoms, they are advised to stay at home.
- b. In longer stays, consider additional pre-trip recommendations and screening, such as suggesting steps to limit exposure to COVID-19, using screening questionnaires, or testing.
- c. Daily screening and monitoring measures should be extensive for staff members.
- d. Set clear standards and boundaries for COVID-19 health and safety measures and guest participation. Make available relevant information about the activity, such as the risks involved and the measures you are taking to manage COVID-19 risks. Ensure guests understand the risks and what is expected of them to participate.
- e. Provide ample access to hand washing facilities and sanitizer. Ask that guests sanitize hands when entering any building, kitchen, or dining facility, before starting an activity, and as often as needed throughout the activity.
- f. Consider adding specific embarkation guidelines to promote distancing and avoiding contact, such as boarding logistics (one by one, in small groups), luggage handling, and assistance to clients at time of embarkation
- g. Events and briefings should accommodate for social or physical distancing. Adapt the spaces and briefings to avoid the need to get close to guests and to increase guests' understanding and compliance with the necessary additional COVID-19 measures.
- h. When closer contact is required consider the use of face coverings.

3. Transport

- a. The use of vehicles to transport clients before, after or during boat tours includes a higher degree of COVID-19 transmission risk. Measures to mitigate risk should be used whenever possible; Open vehicle windows, provide space in between passengers, and have passengers wear face coverings. Consider the use of face shields or the use of private vehicles for transportation as additional measures.

4. On board:

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- a. At areas of high traffic and potential concentration strive to organize social and physical distancing to minimize exposure. For example:
 - i. By creating 'one way' lanes in corridors and passageways, and by serving meals in well ventilated areas and with staggered timing
 - ii. Providing small group activities and staggered embarkation, landing, and activity times.
- b. Consider the use of face coverings when in high circulation areas such as corridors or gangways, and anytime closer contact is required.
- c. Provide ample access to hand washing facilities and sanitizer. Ask that guests sanitize hands when entering public spaces, before starting any activity, and as often as needed throughout the day.
- d. Encourage guests to be responsible for proactively exercising distancing and using face coverings when needed, for example, by avoiding areas with others, spreading out, and spacing as widely as possible.
- e. The protocols for screening and monitoring of COVID-19 symptoms should take into account the trip length. On multi-day trips, in addition to pre-trip health screening by asking about symptoms or checking temperatures, consider other measures to put in place for ongoing monitoring and screening during the tour, such as daily checks.
- f. Consider closing off - or decreasing capacity and increasing sanitation - of areas that may promote higher risk, such as indoor lounges, recreational equipment, public restrooms, or gyms.
- g. It is important to promote air quality by having ample ventilation in the common areas, using natural airflow, or the use of particulate air filters. Ventilation systems should not re-circulate air between cabins or within the vessel.
- h. Medical considerations
 - i. Evaluate the need for defining additional COVID-19 evacuations protocols. Consider what would be necessary should isolation be required. Some tours will have access to prompt evacuation while some will be remote and require keeping symptomatic persons on board until evacuation can be arranged.
 - ii. Consider what onboard and onshore medical resources (equipment and expertise) will be necessary to ensure mitigation practices are met.
 - iii. When administering first aid, some distancing methods need to be adapted or cannot be used. Use Personal Protective Equipment - PPE such as face coverings and gloves.

5. Dining

- a. Distancing: consider alternatives to provide spacing, such as ample guest seating and spaced tables, offering private or outdoors eating locations, and scheduled meal times.
- b. Prevent surface contact where necessary, for example:
 - i. Identify high use areas and touchpoints, such as; workstations, tables, menus, doors, utensils, condiments.
 - ii. Clean high use areas and touchpoints often with a rigorous enhanced sanitation regimen.
 - iii. Prevent contact in high use areas when possible.
- c. Food and beverages should be served by staff members trained and observant of precautions.
- d. Consider serving individually served meals rather than buffet or self-service.
- e. Consider how meals are transported, covered, and consumed. Attempt to individually pack food items and cover meals with a reusable lid. For food samples, consider how the customer will handle and consume safely.
- f. Ensure food safety and restaurant cleaning is in line with local official guidance.
- g. For further information on food handling see [Culinary Experiences amid COVID-19 Guidelines](#).
- h. For further information on food preparation in the field see [Camping amid COVID-19 Guidelines](#).

6. Lodging

- a. FIT or household groups should be favoured to promote distancing. Avoid allowing members of separately booked groups or groups from more than one household unit to share bedrooms.
- b. Attention should be paid to increasing levels of sanitization and disinfection in guest and crew cabins.
- c. Distancing and screening measures should be implemented in line with hotel, local, and official guidelines.
- d. For further information on lodging see [Small Lodges amid COVID-19: Guidelines](#).

7. Open Boats

Either operated independently as a tour, or as support vessels, smaller open boats present unique characteristics associated with COVID-19 risks.

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- a. Ask that guests sanitize hands before entering and as often as needed throughout the ride.
- b. Apply the same principles for preventing surface contact and promoting sanitation described for on board common areas.
- c. Principles of social and physical distancing should be considered, such as distance between people decreasing capacity and designating spaced seating.
- d. Especially when sightseeing, people tend to congregate in one area of the boat, so consider active measures to maintain distancing such as by requiring designated seating or by limiting capacity.
- e. When closer contact is required consider the use of face coverings.

8. On Shore and Attractions

- a. When visiting public attractions or encountering other groups, maintain your company standards of distancing and sanitation. Often people socialize and chat at attractions - remember they might not know nor be following the same health and safety standards that you provide and require of your group.
- b. Favour visiting popular attractions in times of lesser use to minimize your exposure to other people or groups.
- c. Every place visited is a new environment. Get to know the local risk levels, accepted practices, and local authority recommendations
- d. Guests may undertake activities that are run through a separate establishment such as safaris or wildlife experiences, treks, or water sports. For any such activity, enhancing sanitation is a key part of mitigating COVID-19 risk. Whenever possible, participants should avoid sharing equipment and should care for and carry their own personal equipment.
- e. If side activities led by other operators are part of your tour, ensure your health and safety protocols extend to the shoreside experience. For further information see [Cultural Experiences and Sightseeing amid COVID-19: Guidelines](#)
- f. Consider additional protocols or measures for guests upon return of an activity.

9. Facilities and Equipment

- a. Identify and establish cleaning and sanitation schedules and procedures for common areas and high use areas.
- b. Prevent surface contact where needed, for example:
 - i. Identify high use areas and frequently touched areas, such as dining halls, corridors, or handrails.

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- ii. Increase sanitation in high use areas and touchpoints, such as staterooms, handles, doorknobs, and switches, etc.
- c. Sanitization of adventure gear and equipment before and after each use.
 - i. Further recommendations for sanitization of equipment used in certain activities, such as trekking, rafting wildlife viewing, etc can be found in ATTA's [Activity Guidelines](#)
- d. Consider sanitizing any gear that could be a vector for COVID-19 transmission.
- e. Use recommended methods for cleaning and sanitizing that have been determined to kill the COVID-19 virus, such as, appropriate rest time in between uses, or using soap and water or bleach solutions. Follow manufacturer's instructions and the recommendations of official health and safety agencies.
- f. Consider implementing safe-handling procedures for personnel who use cleaning products to clean equipment to prevent harm from chemicals or cross-contamination.

10. Additional resources

- a. [ATTA COVID-19 Guide for the Adventure Travel Industry](#)
- b. Cleveland Clinic
 - i. [Return to work amid COVID-19: A Cleveland Clinic Guide](#)
 - ii. [COVID-19: Creating a Safe Workplace](#)
 - iii. [Advice on Reopening Business: Frequently Asked Questions](#)