
Svalbard Guide Association (SGA)

svalbardguideassociation@gmail.com

Input for Management plan for Central Spitsbergen

15th October 2019

OVERVIEW

The Svalbard Guide Association is representing the needs and interests of the guides on Svalbard and we would like to follow the invitation to hand in some input regarding the Management plan for Central Spitsbergen.

As earlier in a separate email mentioned, we would like to be part of the 'tourism working group', representing the guides voices in following meetings and monitor the process of this project closely.

CERTIFICATION and training of guides

1. With growing tourist numbers we need to get a thorough **CERTIFICATION** program for the guides on Svalbard from an independent source: for instance PTGA (Polar Tourism Guide Association) already is ISO endorsed. It could be easily adjusted and adapted for the use on Svalbard. With Certification we would gain quality. With quality we gain safety.
2. Ongoing guide **TRAINING** possibilities, to be part of a successful management plan.
3. **AN OFFICIAL DEMAND:** Tour Operators shall only employ certified 'Svalbard Guides'

REGULATIONS for Tourism & Locals

1. Clear and visible **REGULATIONS & harsher FINES** for everyone. The guides need the law on their side - to justify our own behaviour & actions in the field. As well as to be able to report the breaking or abuse of these.
2. As most guided trips follow strict guidelines set from the tour operators and Syssemmannen, sometimes locals and unguided tourists clearly do not follow those. This problem needs to be addressed. Beside more **VISIBILITY of existing regulations**, we recommend, as one example '**Wildlife RESTING periods**' for certain areas. Only to certain times during the day tourism will be allowed to guarantee recovering times for wildlife without interruption.
3. More **field INSPECTORS** to enforce the regulations and fines.
4. **SIGNposting and information distribution** - for example: clear marking of town borders, like in Nybyen. Or clear display of regulations & fines on cruise ships.

QUALITY MANAGEMENT

1. Guides are a **RESOURCE**. Development of an easy, reliable and trustworthy process to report misbehaviour and concerns that guides encounter in the field or within their companies itself.
2. Create a **QUALITY SEAL** for companies following certain guidelines and only employ certified guides.
3. Soft Tourism **MARKETING**: develop a marketing strategy without a focus on polar bears - having strong regulations vs. branding the polar bears creates an unfulfillable pressure on guides.

We are looking forward to further cooperation and for more details or if you have questions, please feel free to contact us:

Sincerely,

Svalbard Guide Association (SGA)

svalbardguideassociation@gmail.com