Should Tourism be allowed on Antarctica?

In recent years, tourist expeditions to Antarctica have exponentially increased. This season, around thirty-seven thousand tourists are expected to visit the most isolated continent on the planet. But is it ethically acceptable to embark on a holiday to such a pristine environment?

Firstly, conservationists believe that irreversible damage could be caused to the delicate balance of Antarctica’s environment including its wildlife. Large vessels, which travel to and from the frozen continent, could experience oil leaks: harmful levels of pollution could be released into the ocean therefore harming marine life.

Furthermore, it would be reasonable to conclude that tourists who visit Antarctica might leave rubbish behind. This could lead to the native wildlife (such as penguins and seals) becoming ill and ultimately dying because of human carelessness. Moreover, tourists may unknowingly disturb these animals; this would be particularly harmful during breeding seasons.

However, tour operators argue that tourism could significantly raise people’s awareness of the impact that issues such as global warming have on these remote parts of the world. This may encourage people to pressurise national governments into making stronger pledges to decrease the amount of toxic gases - such as carbon dioxide - released into the atmosphere and increase the use of renewable energy sources.

In addition to this, it is also claimed that the money raised by tour operators could be used to fund further scientific programmes in the Antarctic. Without a native population of its own, some argue that the remote continent needs advocates and that tourism develops a group of people who are ready to support its preservation and scientific exploration.

In conclusion, Antarctica is a unique place to visit but too much tourism could be disastrous for a natural environment. Native wildlife should be left alone as much as possible. I would strongly recommend that tourism continue, but I believe that it should be monitored carefully or we could lose this mysterious and unique environment forever.