

Penguin Island

62°06'S, 57°54'W - Eastern King George Island



Key features

- Dormant volcanic cone
- Southern Giant Petrels
- Chinstrap Penguins
- Vegetation
- Whale bones



Description

TOPOGRAPHY

This oval island is 1.6km long. The site's prominent geological feature is the 170m high cone of Deacon Peak, the northern face of which slopes gently down to the landing beach. Most of the island is surrounded by low cliffs, and there is a crater lake in the northeast.

FAUNA

Confirmed breeders: Chinstrap penguins (*Pygoscelis antarctica*), Adélie penguins (*Pygoscelis adeliae*), southern giant petrels (*Macronectes giganteus*), Antarctic terns (*Sterna vittata*), kelp gulls (*Larus dominicanus*), and skuas (*Catharacta spp.*). Likely breeders: Snowy sheathbills (*Chionis alba*) and Wilson's storm-petrels (*Oceanites oceanicus*). Regular roosting: blue-eyed shags (*Phalacrocorax atriceps*). Regularly haul out: Southern elephant seals (*Mirounga leonina*) and Weddell seals (*Leptonychotes weddellii*).

FLORA

Deschampsia antarctica, *Colobanthus quitensis*, *Xanthoria elegans*, moss species, *Caloplaca* and other crustose lichen species, and large swards of the fruticose lichen *Usnea antarctica*.

Visitor Impact

KNOWN IMPACTS

Erosion of footpaths en route to Deacon Peak.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Trampling of vegetation, and disturbance of wildlife, particularly southern giant petrels.

Landing Requirements

SHIPS*

Ships carrying 200 or fewer passengers. One ship at a time. Maximum 2 ships per day (midnight to midnight).

VISITORS

No more than 100 visitors ashore at any time, exclusive of expedition guides and leaders. 1 guide per 20 visitors. No visitors ashore between 22:00hrs and 04:00hrs (local time). This is in order to establish a rest period for wildlife.

Visitor Area

LANDING AREA

The broad cobble beach along the northern coast. Be sure to land well clear of the low cliffs to the west of the landing beach because of the nesting southern giant petrels (Closed Area A).

CLOSED AREAS

Closed Area A: Northwestern area of the island and low cliffs along the northern coastline where southern giant petrels nest.

Closed Area B: Vicinity of low cliff at the northeastern end of the island, where southern giant petrels nest.

Closed Area C: Rim of "crater lake" and knolls to the south, which have dense vegetation and where southern giant petrels nest.

Closed Area D: Monitoring control sites for penguins at the southern end of the island.

GUIDED WALKING AREAS

Those visiting the chinstrap colonies at the northern end of the island should be under close supervision along the cobble shoreline. Particular caution should be exercised in guiding visitors quietly and slowly along the beach to the north of Closed Area B, to avoid disturbing the nesting southern giant petrels on the ledges above. Visitors to Deacon Peak should be directed toward the designated path to the west of Closed Area B. From the chinstrap colony it is also possible to follow the route south of "Skua Knoll". However, this route should only be taken in small guided groups to avoid trampling the vegetation.

FREE ROAMING AREAS

None.

* A ship is defined as a vessel which carries more than 12 passengers.

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Visitor Code of Conduct

BEHAVIOUR ASHORE

Walk slowly and carefully. Maintain a precautionary distance of 5 metres from wildlife and give animals the right-of-way. Increase this distance if any change in behaviour is observed.

When on the same level as, or higher than, nesting southern giant petrels, maintain a precautionary distance of at least 50 metres. Increase this distance if any change in the birds' behaviour is observed.

Be careful near Antarctic fur seals, they may be aggressive.

Do not walk on any vegetation.

CAUTIONARY NOTES

While weather conditions can change rapidly anywhere in the Antarctic, this location is particularly prone to such changes.



Penguin Island from above



The path up Deacon Peak is clearly visible, particularly late in the season



Landing site - be sure to stay clear of nesting giant petrels to the west

