

16. Devil Island – Vega Island

63°48'00''S, 57°17'00''W
Narrow Island lying in centre of a bay on the north coast of Vega Island. 1 NM east-south-east of Cape Well-met.

ANTARCTIC TREATY

visitor site guide



Key Features

- Adélie penguins
- Two summits
- Volcanic rock face
- Scenic views on the upper peak



Description

TOPOGRAPHY

This narrow 2 km long island is so named for the two peaks located at either end of the island separated by a low lying valley creating a horned effect. The peaks are fringed by cliffs on their north facing side creating an amphitheatre effect on the north shore where the penguin colony is located. The peaks slope off to the south. The site consists primarily of loose gravel with a distinct raised beach along the northern shore. The rock face along parts of the beach is made up of distinct and spectacular volcanic rock formations.

FAUNA

Confirmed breeders: Adélie penguin, Skua.

Hauled out: Antarctic fur seal.

Offshore: Leopard seal.

Suspected Breeders: Kelp gull, Snowy sheathbill, Wilson's storm-petrel.

FLORA

Lichens (*Usnea Antarctica*, *Xanthoria*, spp. and *Caloplaca*, spp.) observed on higher slopes of north eastern peak. Large area of moss spp. situated on flat area behind penguin colony.

Visitor Impact

KNOWN IMPACTS

Erosion of footpaths.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Disturbance of wildlife, trampling of vegetation, further erosion of footpaths.

Landing Requirements

SHIPS*

Max pax on board: 200

Ships per day: 2

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

VISITORS

Maximum number of visitors at any time, exclusive of expedition guides and leaders: 100

Visitors per guide: 20

Curfew time period (from/to), in order to establish a rest period for wildlife: 22:00-04:00

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Visitor Area

LANDING AREA

Possible south side landing: Beach below the steep volcanic rock face on northern coast of island, to the west of the semi submerged reef which runs from the western end of the north shore out at a diagonal to the shore.

Possible short walk landing: If south side site is heavy with snow/ice visitors may choose to land on the beach area further to east, directly in front of colony if it is high tide. Extreme care must be taken on the approach.

Ice may be a factor when landing on the South Side of the island, and should be monitored. The landing beach on the South Side can be steep in places and will require appropriate marking of route by guides. Landings are possible on the north side, but only for short walks to where the first penguin colony begins. At certain times of the season these landings may not be possible due to penguin traffic on the water's edge.

CLOSED AREA

Closed Area A: Vegetation patch situated behind the Adélie colony.

Northern Side of the Island: The previous gap between the penguin colonies utilized for transiting to the top of the terrace and further to the overlook, now narrows to less than 1m/3ft in some places due to penguin nests.

GUIDED WALKING AREA

Along the beach from the southern landing site and up a short steep slope from the beach to the raised beach area behind. Walk should be flagged and closely guided with no more than 20 people in the area at one time.

Walks to the top of the south-western peak should be flagged. A single track should be followed to prevent creation of ribbon paths.

Landings are possible on the north side, but only for short walks to where the first penguin colony begins.

Landings for longer walks to the overlook and across the island to the Penguin colonies should be done from the South Side of the island.

FREE ROAMING AREA

Visitors may roam freely in the immediate landing area at low tide and along the beach.

Visitor code of conduct

BEHAVIOUR ASHORE

- Take care not to displace penguins along the shoreline. Do not impede Adélie penguins access routes to the sea.
- 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.

CAUTIONARY NOTES

- Landing may be difficult at high water or if extensive ice present on shore.
- Hazardous rocks and band of reef lie immediately off shore the northern shore. Bergy bits, growlers and brash regularly get stranded on the reef. These can fracture suddenly during stranding or subsequent re-floating. Particular caution should be taken when using small boats and kayaks.
- Strong winds and tidal variation can bring pack and brash ice quickly onto the beach area.
- On the col leading to the peak the western side of ridge drops off very steeply - extreme care should be taken. Visitors should stick to marked paths.

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Landing beach



Paths on Devil Island



View from the summit

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