

39. Yalour Islands

65°14'00" S, 64°10'00" W
Small group of islands and rocks in the Southern part of the Wilhelm Archipelago, 1NM Northwest of Cape Tuxen.

ANTARCTIC TREATY

visitor site guide



Key Features

- Small archipelago surrounded by mountainous scenery
- Adélie penguin colony and one of the southernmost recorded gentoo penguin colonies
- Summer habitat of orcas foraging on penguins and seals
- Mosses & Lichens



Description

TOPOGRAPHY

A 1.5 mile long group of scattered low lying islands and rocks in the southern part of the Wilhelm Archipelago. The coastline is primarily rocky, comprising predominantly igneous intrusive rocks, usually with a short steep climb up to the penguin breeding areas.

FAUNA

Confirmed breeders: Adélie penguin, Antarctic tern, Blue-eyed shag, Brown skua, Gentoo penguin, Kelp gull, South Polar Skua, Wilson's storm petrel.

Hunt off-shore: Orca whale.

Occasionally haul out: Antarctic fur seal, Southern elephant seal, Weddell seal.

Seen near-shore: Crabeater Seal, Leopard seal.

Suspected Breeders: Snowy sheathbill.

FLORA

Small patches of bearded and crustose lichen species including *Xanthoria* spp., *Buellia* spp., *Caloplaca* spp., *Usnea* spp. Extensive moss beds and Antarctic hairgrass (*Deschampsia Antarctica*) may be present. Snow algae may be present late season.

OTHER

The site is recognised as being one of the southernmost recorded Gentoo penguin colonies as well as a number of other confirmed breeding bird species and a considerable coverage of mosses and lichens. It has seen a growth in visitor numbers in recent years; reaching a peak, to date, of 1,953 visitors in 2013-14 season; the site had 27 visits during this austral summer season and was briefly amongst the twenty most visited sites.

Visitor Impact

KNOWN IMPACTS

None known.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Trampling vegetation and initial soils and disturbance of nesting birds and seals.

Landing Requirements

SHIPS*

Max pax on board: 500

Ships at a time: 1

Comments: Maximum 2 ships per day, of which no more than 1 may be a vessel carrying more than 200 passengers.

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

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VISITORS

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

Visitor Area

LANDING AREA

Depending on the state of the sea ice, snow conditions onshore and tide, on the largest island there are several potential landing points on cobbled shoreline along the southern shore of the largest island, with a climb up rocky shores to visit the nesting penguins.

CLOSED AREA

Northern and eastern parts of the largest island (especially cliffs), zones of rich vegetation and initial soils formation, nesting sites. All small islands of Yalour archipelago where there is no place for landings.

GUIDED WALKING AREA

None.

FREE ROAMING AREA

Visitors may roam freely on snow-covered areas, but under close supervision. Given the irregular topography at this site, guides should keep visual contact on all visitors at all times.

Visitor code of conduct

BEHAVIOUR ASHORE

- Avoid disrupting penguin routes to and from the sea. Always give animals the right-of-way.
- Do not walk on any vegetation.
- All visits are to be conducted in accordance with the General Guidelines for Visitors to the Antarctic.

CAUTIONARY NOTES

Small boat drivers should be aware of submerged rocks and foul waters surrounding the island and fast moving current at certain states of the tide, which can affect pack ice conditions. Compacted snow and ice around the coastline can be undercut by sea water and result in overhangs, which can be dangerous.

COMMENTS

All visits are to be conducted in accordance with the General Guidelines for Visitors to the Antarctic.

Visits should always be kept to areas where the snow is thick enough to avoid damage to the vegetation, particularly moss and lichen, which is abundant across all exposed rock and boulder areas.

Small boat cruising is an appropriate alternative to landing at this site, particularly late season when snow has melted exposing more vegetation.

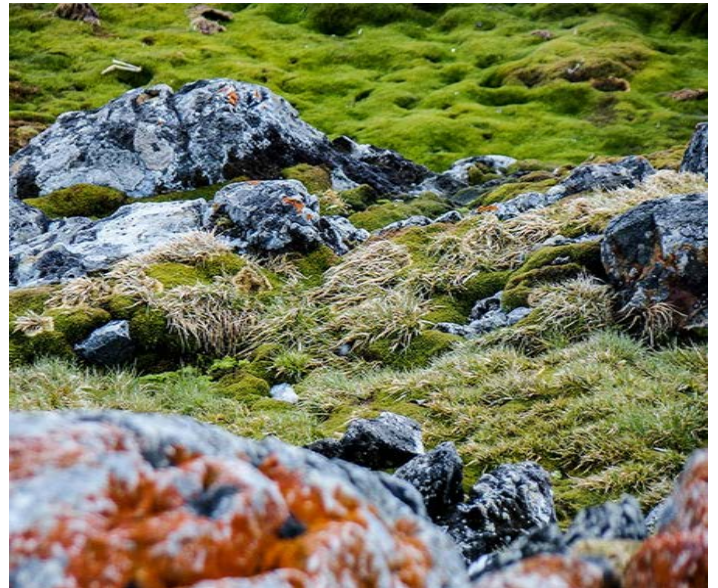
Be particularly sensitive to penguin highways and ensure visitors are guided in these areas.

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