

25. Detaille Island

66°52'00''S, 66°48'00''W

Last revision: 2026

ANTARCTIC TREATY

visitor site guide



Key Features

- Historic British Base 'W', Detaille Island



Description

TOPOGRAPHY

Detaille is a small island set in the Lallemand Fjord off the Loubet coast. The ground is predominantly rocky with areas of gravel.

FAUNA

Confirmed breeders: Adélie penguin.

Occasional: Humpback whale, Orca whale.

Also present: Weddell seal.

FLORA

In the absence of any detailed floristic survey, only one species of lichen has been recorded at Detaille Island.

OTHER

Base 'W' is designated as Historic Site and Monument No. 83. It is sited at the northern end of the island. It is noteworthy as a relatively unaltered British scientific base of the late 1950s, providing an evocative insight into the way the bases were occupied during this period. It was built in 1956 and closed in 1959 due to the difficulty of accessing the base. It was subsequently reoccupied for six months in 1965/66. During its short history as an occupied base it contributed towards the geophysical programme of the International Geophysical Year (IGY). In addition to the base building, there are also dog kennels, an emergency store, fuel drum and cargo depots, an anemometer tower and wireless masts.

Visitor Impact

KNOWN IMPACTS

None known.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Fire. Minor fuel spills. Disturbance of historic artefacts.

Landing Requirements

SHIPS*

Max pax on board: 500

Ships at a time: 1

Comments: Maximum 2 ships per day (midnight to midnight), of which no more than 1 can carry over 200 passengers.

* 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: 50

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Comments: No more than 12 visitors are allowed inside the base at any one time**. Visitors must be closely supervised. Base 'W' was proposed as HSM No. 83 by the UK. Visits to the hut may only take place with prior permission given by a Party. Visits to the hut may only take place with prior permission given in an operator permit/authorisation. The UK Antarctic Heritage Trust, managers of the site (HSM No. 83), should also be informed prior to the visit.

**Visitors enter the base at their own risk and the UK authorities will not be liable for any personal injury or damage to property that may be sustained.

Visitor Area

LANDING AREA

The preferred landing site is in the small bay to the south of the hut.

The deepest channel for approach to a possible landing site can be found on the northern coast of the island. In the inlet west of the emergency stores hut, there is a deep channel leading to a hard rock ledge for visitors to land on.

An alternative landing site on the northern coast of the island is east of the emergency stores hut, which is generally clear of ice when the inlet is filled.

The landing south of Base 'W' is challenging with rocks on approach, and a steep slope with loose scree material makes difficult footing for visitors.

CLOSED AREA

Visitors should not access any of the secondary huts or other structures.

The southern half of the island has an Adélie penguin colony that cannot be reached on land. This may be viewed via small boat or other water activities.

GUIDED WALKING AREA

None.

FREE ROAMING AREA

Visitors may roam freely under close supervision.

Visitor code of conduct

BEHAVIOUR ASHORE

- A record of each visit should be left in the Visitors Book, located in the base.
- All boots and outdoor clothing should be cleaned of snow and grit before entering the building. All backpacks and large bags should be left outside the hut.
- Any damage to the hut should be reported to the UK as the Party undertaking management of the site.
- Artefacts should not be handled or removed from the site. Do not sit on chairs or other furniture, or lay objects down on tables or work surfaces.
- Base 'W' has a large amount of material inside and around the outside of the main hut, including hazardous materials. This makes the base extremely interesting from a historical point of view.
- Loose gravel, mud and snow should be swept up, and floors wiped dry after each visit.
- No overnight stays in the hut are allowed. The hut is available for educational visits and, except in emergency circumstances, should not be used for any other purpose.
- Smoking and the use of candles, matches or stoves are prohibited in and around the hut.
- The hut windows are all covered with fixed shutters and so electric torches will be needed to see anything of the interior.
- Visitors are to leave the base safe and fully closed up on departure.

CAUTIONARY NOTES

Boat drivers should be aware of submerged rocks on approaching the landing site. The rocks at the landing site can be slippery when wet.

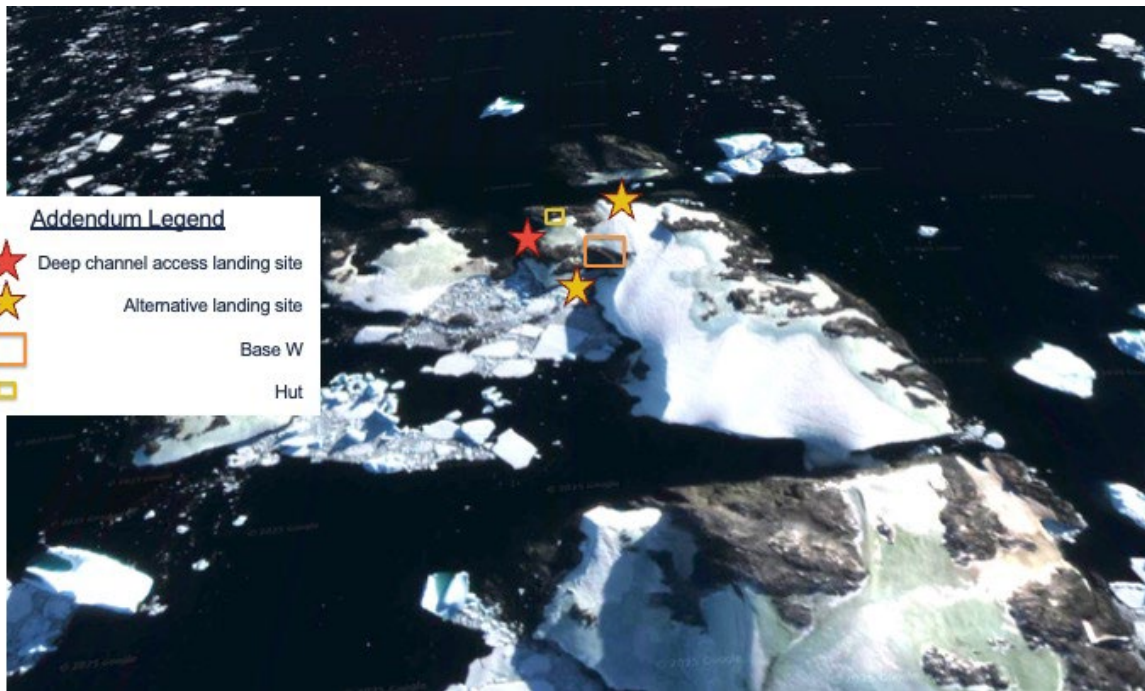
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Laura Mory

Photo of the South of the Base W landing

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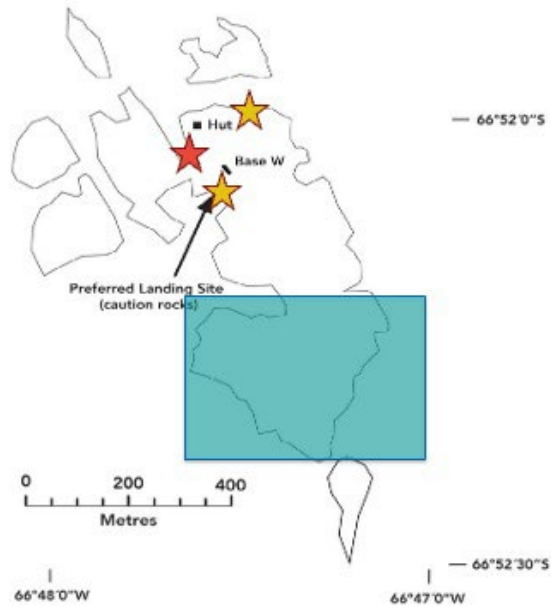
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Detaille Island

- Addendum Legend
-  Deep channel access landing site
 -  Alternative landing site
 -  Adélie penguin colony



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