

Brown Bluff

63°32'S, 56°55'W - East coast of Tabarin Peninsula on the south-western coast of Antarctic Sound.

Key features

- Adélie and gentoo penguins
- Geological features
- Continental landing



Description

TOPOGRAPHY

1.5km long cobble and ash beach rising increasingly steeply towards towering red-brown tuff cliffs which are embedded with volcanic bombs. The cliffs are heavily eroded, resulting in loose scree and rock falls on higher slopes and large, wind eroded boulders on the beach. At high water the beach area can be restricted. Permanent ice and tidewater glaciers surround the site to the north and south occasionally filling the beach with brash ice.

FAUNA

Confirmed breeders: gentoo penguin (*Pygoscelis papua*), Adélie penguin (*Pygoscelis adeliae*), pintado petrel (*Daption capense*), snow petrel (*Pagodroma nivea*), skua (*Catharacta*, spp.) and kelp gull (*Larus dominicanus*). Suspected breeders: southern giant petrel (*Macronectes giganteus*) southern fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*) and Wilson's storm-petrel (*Oceanites oceanicus*). Regularly haul out: Weddell seals (*Leptonychotes weddellii*). Leopard seals (*Hydrurga leptonyx*) often hunt offshore.

FLORA

Xanthoria, spp. and *Caloplaca*, spp. observed on exposed boulders from shoreline to an elevation of 185m. Some moss, spp. exposed at higher elevations near glacial drainage.

OTHER

Hazardous rocks and reefs lie immediately off shore.

Visitor Impact

KNOWN IMPACTS

None.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Disturbance of wildlife, especially kelp gulls.

Landing Requirements

SHIPS*

Ships carrying 500 or fewer passengers. One ship at a time. Maximum 3 ships per day (midnight to midnight), of which no more than 1 may be a vessel carrying more than 200 passengers.

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 resting period for the wildlife.

Visitor Area

LANDING AREA

Primary: The southern end of the beach to the east of the three large boulders at the northern end of the snow slope - protected by two reefs.

CLOSED AREAS

Closed Area A: Kelp gull colony in the boulder area behind the landing beach, extending from the three large boulders up the small gully running south-southeast behind the moraine ridge.

Closed Area B: Area of densely packed breeding Adélie penguins at north end of beach.

GUIDED WALKING AREAS

Elevated areas behind the landing beach:

Visits to the snow petrel nests on the slopes behind the penguin rookeries should be done in closely guided groups with a ratio of 1 guide to 12 passengers – where the guide knows the location of the nests in advance. Care should be taken not to disturb loose rocks. Groups visiting the moraine ridge along the edge of the snow slope to the east of the landing beach should be closely guided to avoid disturbance to skua nests up on the high ground.

FREE ROAMING AREAS

Visitors may roam freely along the main flat beach area between landing site to the south and the closed areas.

Note: the littoral zone up to the high tide mark is often used as an access route by Adélie penguins. Visitors should be kept above the high water mark.

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Aerial view of Brown Bluff

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. Take care not to disturb kelp gull nesting sites. Be careful around Antarctic fur seals, they may be aggressive. Take care not to displace penguins along the shoreline. Keep visitors above the high tide mark and at high water be aware it may be necessary to have visitors walk in small groups escorted by staff.

CAUTIONARY NOTES

Strong and katabatic winds are a feature of this area, and pack and brash ice are frequently blown onto the beach area. Rock falls occur from the cliffs and steeper scree slopes. The primary landing beach may be crowded with wildlife. Landing beach is prone to swells from the north and the north-east.

