



Baily Head, Deception Island

62°58'S, 60°30'W

Natural amphitheatre with Antarctica's largest colony of Chinstrap penguins.

Key features

- Chinstrap penguins
- Outstanding scenery

Caution

- Large swell can make landings extremely hazardous



Description

TOPOGRAPHY

Baily Head is a rocky headland exposed to the Bransfield Strait on the south east coast of Deception Island. The site comprises the southern end of a long linear beach which runs along most of the eastern side of Deception Island, and a narrow valley that rises steeply inland to a semi-circular ridgeline, giving the impression of a natural 'amphitheatre'. It is bounded to the north by a large glacier and to the south by the cliffs of Baily Head. A substantial melt-stream runs through the centre of the valley during the austral summer.

FAUNA

Confirmed breeders: chinstrap penguins (*Pygoscelis antarctica*), brown skuas (*Catharacta antarctica lonnbergi*), cape petrels (*Daption capensis*) and snowy sheathbills (*Chionis alba*). Giant petrels (*Macronectes giganteus*) may also be present at the site.

Regularly haul out: Antarctic fur seal (*Arctocephalus gazella*).

FLORA

The green alga *Prasiola crispa* is abundant at Baily Head. Four species of lichen, six species of moss and the flowering Antarctic pearlwort (*Colobanthus quitensis*) have also been recorded.

OTHER

Baily Head comprises part of the Deception Island Antarctic Specially Managed Area No 4.

Visitor Impact

KNOWN IMPACTS

None.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Disturbance of wildlife, in particular as visitor space is limited. Trampling of vegetation, and trail formation. The Spanish Antarctic Programme plans to establish a monitoring programme to determine the impact of visitation on this colony.

Landing Requirements

SHIPS*

Ships carrying 200 or fewer passengers (however, note visitor restrictions below). 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, and no more than 350 visitors per day. 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

Beach immediately in front of penguin colony. Note that the landing beach is susceptible to heavy swell and surf that can make landings impossible much of the time.

CLOSED AREAS

Closed Area A: the foot of the rock cliffs to avoid falling rock.

Closed Area B: the glacier front to avoid falling ice.

Closed Area C: the upper slopes on the steep southern side of Baily Head to avoid rock and soil disturbance and damage to vegetation.

GUIDED WALKING AREAS

Visits to the colony should be in small closely supervised groups of no more than 20 visitors which are well spaced with at least one guide per group. Each group should follow the same route. Visitors need to be very closely supervised when passing through the narrow corridor that runs alongside the main melt stream between the colony and the beach. Visitors must remain outside the natural 'boundary' of discrete breeding groups.

FREE ROAMING AREAS

Visitors may roam freely in the landing beach area between the cliffs and the edge of the penguin highway, taking care not to displace birds and give them the right of way.

*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, particularly when walking between the landing site and the colony. Increase this distance if any change in behaviour is observed.

Take care not to displace penguins along the shoreline or impinge on the penguin highway.

Avoid stopping in the narrow passage in the penguin highway where it passes over rocks. Visitors remaining in this area for extended periods may block the passage of foraging penguins.

Beware of, and maintain an appropriate distance from fur seals in this area. In particular, late season landings may be inhibited by large numbers of fur seals hauled out onshore.

Walk carefully and do not tread on vegetated areas.

Important seismic monitoring or other scientific equipment may be deployed at Baily Head. Such equipment is highly sensitive to disturbance. At least 20 metres must be maintained from scientific equipment, which will usually be marked with a red flag.

Hiking between Baily Head and Whalers Bay is discouraged because of environmental and safety concerns. This south-east area of Deception Island has the largest recorded stand of Antarctic pearlwort (*Colobanthus quitensis*).

CAUTIONARY NOTES

Large swell and strong winds can make landings and pick up of passengers extremely hazardous. Landings should only be undertaken when safe to do so. Once ashore, remain vigilant to changes in sea state and weather conditions at the landing site and safe return to vessels.

