



Esperanza Antarctic Station (Esperanza Bay)

63° 24'S, 56° 59'W

South coast of Hope Bay - western margin of the Antarctic Sound

Key features

- Antarctic Station
- Mountain and glacial landscape
- Extensive Adelie penguin colonies
- Stone hut (Historic Sites and Monuments No 39)
- Monte Flora (Antarctic Specially Protected Areas No 148 - northern slopes of the mount)

Description

Topography

Located at Punta Foca, on the bay of the same name, in the extreme Northeast of the Antarctic Peninsula, on the western margin of the Antarctic Sound, Esperanza Station is located in the middle between Aguila Cove to the west and Choza Cove to the east.

The north coast of the bay has a design formed by glacial walls that penetrate vertically into the sea. The southern coast has a steep slope of landslides for the most part.

Mount Flora is located 3 km southeast of the facilities, with important scientific and historical values associated with the significant patrimony of the geological discovery of Antarctica, so its northern slopes are part of ASPA 148.

Fauna

The area presents a great diversity of specimens, mainly during the summer months.

Several species of birds characteristic of the Antarctic Peninsula nest in the area, Adelie penguin (*Pygoscelis adeliae*) - standing out as a mega-colony of the Antarctic Peninsula (with more than 100,000 breeding pairs) and the only one with more than twenty years of monitoring-, Gentoo penguin (*Pygoscelis papua*), Kittiwake (*Larus dominicanus*), brown skua and southern polar skua (*Catharacta lonnbergii*), tern (*Sterna vittata*) and Antarctic pigeon (*Chionis alba*).

Although there are no stable reproductive settlements of pinnipeds in this area, in some years and particularly between the months of September and November, female Weddell seals (*Leptonychotes weddellii*) can be observed resting on the beaches along with pups a few weeks old in different sectors of the coast. Also, throughout the spring and summer, between Punta Foca or on the east coast of Choza Cove it is possible to observe isolated individuals of sea leopard (*Hydrurga leptonyx*) active predator of penguins, or specimens of crabeater seal (*Lobodon carcinophaga*) and Antarctic fur seal (*Arctocephalus gazella*).

Flora

Vegetation is represented by crustose lichens that cover rock surfaces and, to a lesser extent, bryophytes dominated by *Politrychum* in sheltered sites and the terrestrial algae *Prasiola crispa* associated with flooded or poorly drained sites.

Others

Historic sites and monuments # 39. Stone hut at Hope Bay, Trinity Peninsula, built in January 1903 by a party of the Swedish South Polar Expedition, headed by Dr. Otto Nordenskjold.

Historic sites and monuments # 40. Bust of General San Martin, grotto with a statue of the Virgin of Lujan, and a flag mast at Base 'Esperanza', Hope Bay, erected by Argentina in 1955; together with a graveyard with stele in memory of members of Argentine expeditions who died in the area.



Impacts by visitors

Known impacts

Damage to vegetation in the area occupied by the station's facilities.

Potential impacts

- Greater damage to vegetation and substrate by the constant presence of visitors.
- Perturbation of fauna, especially Adelie penguins, and damage to historic sites.

Requisites for disembarkation*

Ships

- Ships** with 500 passengers or less on board.
- One ship at the time.
- Maximum three vessels per week, and two per day (if 100 passengers or less) or one vessel per day (if more than 100 passengers).

Operators

- Visits to the station may only be made with the prior agreement of the Station Leader.
- Vessels should contact the station 48 hours in advance, via Channel 16, via email at radiobaseesperanza@gmail.com and ambientedna@gmail.com or ambiente_dna@mrecic.gov.ar or by telephone 0810-222-0770.¹
- Visits should take place without interfering with the station's activities.

Visitors

- No more than 80 visitors can disembark at a time, not counting expedition guides or leaders.
- At least one guide is required per each group of 20 visitors.

Areas to visit

Disembarkation site

Station pier, Puerto Moro (Landing point – LP – on the map).

Closed areas

- Closed areas A: ASPA 148 (Monte Flora).
- Closed areas B: penguin rookeries and facilities not authorised by station personnel to be visited.
- Closed areas C: fuel bunkers, new heliport and waste depot.
- Closed areas D: hangar, mechanical workshop, patrol depot, carpentry, spare parts depot and treatment plant.

Guided visit zones

Walks should be conducted in groups of no more than 40 people assisted by a member of the station and respecting the requirement of one vessel guide per every 20 passengers.

Free transit zones

None.

Behaviour code for visitors

Behaviour on land

- Walk slowly and carefully.
- Respect the privacy of the station's personnel, and do not interfere with the station's activities.
- Behave in line with advice and instructions from guides and station personnel.
- Do not separate from the group.
- Walking on vegetation is not allowed.
- Do not enter the facilities, unless authorized by the personnel.
- Keep a precautionary distance of 5 metres from fauna and give right of way to animals.
- Take greater distance if any change in animals' behaviour is observed.

Cautions

- Help protect Historic Sites and Monuments (HSM 39 and 40).
- Respect the perimeter boundary of SMH 39. If the perimeter chain is not present, always keep a minimum distance of one metre from the hut, as footprints next to the walls could cause damage.

¹If any of the contact points change, the National Programmes and IAATO will be informed.

* Only applicable to visitors to Esperanza Antarctic Station.

** Thus are defined those vessels with over 12 people on board

