

GODTHUL

Visitor Management Plan (inc Extended Walk)

v2015



Godthul

LOCATION

- Latitude: 54° 18' S
- Longitude: 36° 17' W

Eastern shore of Barff Peninsula.

KEY FEATURES

- Historical interest
- Gentoos

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DESCRIPTION

○ Topography

Godthul is a 3km long harbour between Cape George to the south and Long Point to the north. The head walls of a glacial cirque form a natural cliff amphitheatre, which surrounds the harbour and extensive scree, slopes rise to a skyline of 500m high jagged mountain ridges. Nestling at the foot of the head wall are two lakes, 'Echo Lake' and 'Lake Aviemore'. The former lies at the head of the harbour and feeds a waterfall that plunges 30 m into a tidal pool. The latter lies a short distance inland above the landing beach.

○ Fauna

Confirmed breeders: gentoo penguin (*Pygoscelis papua*), light-mantled sooty albatross (*Phoebastria palpebrata*), southern and northern giant petrels (*Macronectes giganteus* and *Macronectes halli*), white-chinned petrel (*Procellaria aequinoctialis*), kelp gull (*Larus dominicanus*), brown skua (*Stercorarius antarcticus*), Antarctic tern (*Sterna vittatae georgiae*), South Georgia pintail (*Anas georgica georgica*), snowy sheathbill (*Chionis alba*), elephant seal (*Mirounga leonina*) and fur seal (*Arctocephalus gazella*).

Suspected breeders: Wilson's storm-petrel (*Oceanites oceanicus*).

Habitat restoration projects to remove introduced land mammals commenced in 2013 with the removal of reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus*), and the brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*). Any subsequent evidence live rodents or reindeer must be reported to the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI).

○ Flora

The steep slopes along the coast and on sections of the upper amphitheatre are covered in tussac. On the gentler rolling areas a mosaic of *Festuca* grassland and mire and bog communities mix with extensive areas of grazed tussac, moss and *Poa annua*.

○ Other

Relics from a whaling shore depot are found near the landing beach and are partially covered by tussac. Whale bones are strewn along the shoreline between the depot and the bluffs at the north end of the beach.

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VISITOR IMPACTS

- **Known Impacts**

None

- **Potential Impacts**

Disturbance of wildlife and whaling artefacts.

LANDING REQUIREMENTS

- **Ships ***

Ships carrying 200 or fewer passengers. 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.

1 experienced guide (minimum) per 20 visitors.

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



VISITOR AREAS

- **Landing Area**

Beach area north of the whaling shore depot relics.

- **Closed Areas**

Closed Area A: the immediate vicinity of the whaling shore depot and related artefacts.

Closed Area B: Giant petrel breeding areas on hill above the north end of the landing beach.

- **Guided Walking Areas**

(See Extended Walks section)

- **Free Roaming Areas**

Beach area to the north of the whaling depot area.

The grassy slopes above the landing beach and whaling depot area, including 'Lake Aviemore', with the exception of closed area B. Access to the area above the whaling depot is easiest if you follow one of the several stream beds to the north of the depot, checking first that it is not in use as a gentoo access path.



VISITOR CODE OF CONDUCT

○ Behaviour ashore

Walk slowly and carefully. Maintain a precautionary distance from wildlife and give animals the right-of-way. Increase your distance if any change in behaviour is observed.

Be alert to fur seals hidden in the tussac.

Be aware of giant petrel nests, keeping a minimum distance of 10 metres.

Remain vigilant for diving-petrel burrow areas and avoid them.

Keep out of gentoo penguin access routes between the colony and the beach.

Do not remove or disturb any historic artefacts.

○ Cautionary notes

Tracks can traverse muddy, slippery and steep terrain.

Minimise use of ship lights at nightfall to reduce risk of bird strikes and remain vigilant.

○ Biosecurity

All landings must comply with GSGSSI biosecurity measures and rigorous self-audit checks must be carried out prior to landing.



Mixed vegetation on the slopes above the landing beach

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GODTHUL HILLWALK EXTENDED WALK GUIDELINES

Walk Rating: Green

Staff/guest ratio: 1/20

Max. guests: 100

Total height gain: 300m

Map: BAS 25 Series Barff Peninsula (in production 2014)

The views from the top of Godthul Hill are spectacular so the climb is well worth the effort on a good day. After leaving the tussac the terrain is never overly challenging and **with the exception of a 300m vertical drop to the sea on the east side of the peak** there are no hidden hazards.

Extended walks should never be undertaken if guides or visitors have any concerns. Careful consideration must be given to the fitness and ability of visitors intending to undertake the walk before participation can be approved. The remote location, lack of medical facilities and highly changeable weather mean that the consequences of an accident on an extended walk will be far more serious than would otherwise be the case in other less remote locations. For this reason alone, it is inappropriate to treat these walks as something that 'anyone can do'.

It is a condition of the visit permit that Visit Permit Holders (and all staff) adhere Site Visitor Management Plans and guidelines for extended walks. Permit Holders must ensure that all other staff and guides are equally well briefed and that they adhere to all SVMP's.



WALK PLANNING AND PREPARATION

○ **Walk Grading**

Extended walks have all been graded on the basis of length, terrain and technical difficulty.

The Godthul Hillwalk has been graded as green.

Green Walk:

- Straightforward walk, which might cover large distances, but poses little technical difficulty and does not require difficult navigation or route choices en route.
- Minimum staff (guide) to visitor ratio: 1:20. Additional staff should accompany the walk to ensure adequate staffing levels are maintained at all times to manage and respond to any incident arising.
- Suitable for adequately fit novice hill walkers. Robust footwear is essential, and walking boots are recommended.
- Maximum group size 100 visitors (plus guides / staff). Guides are strongly encouraged to manage walkers in discrete groups, rather than one long extended chain.

○ **Waypoints**

The waypoints have been produced as an aid to navigation on the walks. In the majority of cases, these provide a tangible point to head towards in poor visibility; the ground covered between the points is at the discretion of the leader and will depend on, for example, the nature and experience of the group.

○ **Staff Experience**

Leading guides should ideally hold recognised qualifications (for example Mountain Leader Award).

All staff should be able to use GPS, map and compass and hold a current first aid qualification. Previous hill walking and guiding experience is important. Every staff member is expected to have sufficient experience to be able to independently and confidently manage and navigate a group of visitors down off a hill to safety.

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○ **Staff Equipment**

There should be sufficient equipment carried by the each staff member to keep a group sheltered from the elements, raise the alarm if necessary, deal with immediate first aid, and have the tools to navigate independently.

This should include:

- Compass and whistle
- Local area map (plus GPS as required)
- Spare food and drink
- Spare clothing
- Basic first aid kit
- VHF

As a group, the staff should ensure they carry:

- 1 Iridium phone (minimum)
- 2 GPS units and spare batteries (minimum), more are required for larger groups
- Spare walking poles
- Group shelters to accommodate the complete party distributed between staff members

○ **Visitors Equipment**

Visitor's personal equipment should include:

- Spare clothing
- Hat and gloves
- Emergency food & Drink (or access to these at all times)
- Personal medication (in case of delay ashore)
- Walking poles (if they normally used).

Careful consideration must always be given to footwear. Wellington boots should be avoided, particularly if visitors are not steady on their feet. Walking boots are strongly encouraged and recommended for this walk, due to the slippery conditions.

Guides should pay close attention to the footwear worn by the visitors.

○ **Medical Provision**

It is a requirement of visiting vessels to be self sufficient in every respect, including medical cover. The visit permit holder and leading guide must both check and ensure that there is adequate medical provision and a tested medical response plan in place to rapidly respond to any injury sustained during the walk or medical trauma incident.

All incidents, accidents and injuries, no matter how minor, must be reported to GSGSSI.

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ROUTE DETAILS



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The most straightforward route is via the south ridge and is described here. However, there are also numerous possible routes up the WSW face.

Ascend from the beach via the easiest route through the tussac directly to the first waypoint, just above an obvious col in the ridge.

WPT 1 Col

54° 17.906' S

036° 16.133' W

200m ASL

From the col, climb the ridge by the easiest line. Be aware of nesting terns in the scree at certain times of year.

WPT 2 Summit

54° 17.721' S

036° 15.958' W

300m ASL

Fantastic views, where the cliff drops 300m to the sea. **The cliff edge, however, is unstable so groups of visitors should be very carefully managed here.**

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