

Hydrurga Rocks

Possible landing site:
64°8'35.22"S 61°37'35.86"W

Possible ship's anchorage:
64.148214°S 61.610978°W

IAATO

visitor site guide



Key Features

- Chinstrap penguins
- Seals regularly hauled out
- Variety of bird life.



Description

TOPOGRAPHY

Hydrurga Rocks are a small group of islets located East of the much larger Two Hummocks Island, on the Northwest of the Gerlache Strait at the same latitude of Cierva Cove.

The largest island that is visited is around 1.2km (0.75mi) long and 115m (375ft) wide

The landing beach is located on the Western side of a little cove that you access from the very Northern side of the main island.

The beach, which has an axis North-South, is very small, 25m (85ft) long, composed of small to medium size pebbles, relatively flat and about 10m (35ft) wide. The beach is bound to the North and South by larger rocks. The specific areas of interest are via an uneven terrain on flat metamorphic rocks, with some areas permanently covered by snow.

Hydrurga Rocks is sheltered from the elements such as wind and swell.

FAUNA

Confirmed breeders: Blue Eyed shag, Kelp gull, Brown skua and Chinstrap penguins.

Other bird life regularly present on site: Southern Giant petrel and Snowy sheathbill

Pinniped visitors: Weddell seal, Leopard seal and Southern Elephant seal, Antarctic fur seal (after mid-January).

Cetacean visitors: Humpback whale and Antarctic Minke whale

On rare occasion: Killer whale

FLORA

Few lichens, like the common orange lichen "Xanthoria elegans" is found on the cliff down from the birds' nests, as well as other unknown species of lichen.

Visitor Impact

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Disturbance of wildlife.

Creation of postholes with deep snow.

Landing Requirements

SHIPS*

Max passengers onboard: 200

Ships per day: 3

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

VISITOR NUMBERS

Maximum 50 passengers ashore.

Recommend guide to pax ratio – 1:10 on guided walks.

The site is very small and could become congested, especially at the end of the season when there is less space to walk around due to the melting snow.

LANDING AREA

Shallow water inside the landing cove with some obvious reefs to be avoided.

Be careful of the swell and change of weather around the ship. It may not be possible to see the ship or monitor the weather, so maintain good contact with bridge when ashore.

To reach land by small boat there are two possible routes:

- a– Follow the contour of the island anti-clockwise until the entrance of the northern cove.
- b– Straight between the northern reefs off the shore and left towards the cove.

Once landed, move carefully and slowly due to potential presence of wildlife at the landing site. Walk inland and turn slightly left behind the first rookery of Chinstrap penguins. Be aware that metamorphic rocks may be slippery due to guano. When permanent snow cover is reached, walk straight towards the south. If snow conditions and the terrain allow, you might proceed further South to reach the Southern end of the island or a viewpoint, although note that this is a narrow and steep passage and care should be taken.



CLOSED AREA

The top of the rocky promontory should be avoided.

See the map for more info.

GUIDED WALKING AREA

Possible “loop” route where passengers can walk freely, rather than a straight line where there can be a traffic jam and post-holing when turning around.

The walking route extends to the South, to the end of the island if possible, or stops when the terrain is too difficult.

Visitor Code of Conduct

BEHAVIOUR ASHORE

Be quiet and courteous of wildlife. Avoid penguin highways, maintain 5m (15ft) from wildlife at all times.

Take care to avoid the slippery rocks covered with guano in the vicinity of the landing.

When ashore in snow and ice, avoid making 'postholes' which can trap penguins. Try to maintain the same track through the snow. If holes are made, carefully fill them in or make them wider and/or sloped so that wildlife can easily step out of them.

The site is also excellent for small boat cruising. The same wildlife can be enjoyed from water level, and growlers and icebergs are often grounded and there may be marine mammals in the area.

