

Elephant Point

62° 41'32.7S 60°51' 26.4W
Southwest coast of Livingston Island,
South Shetland Islands

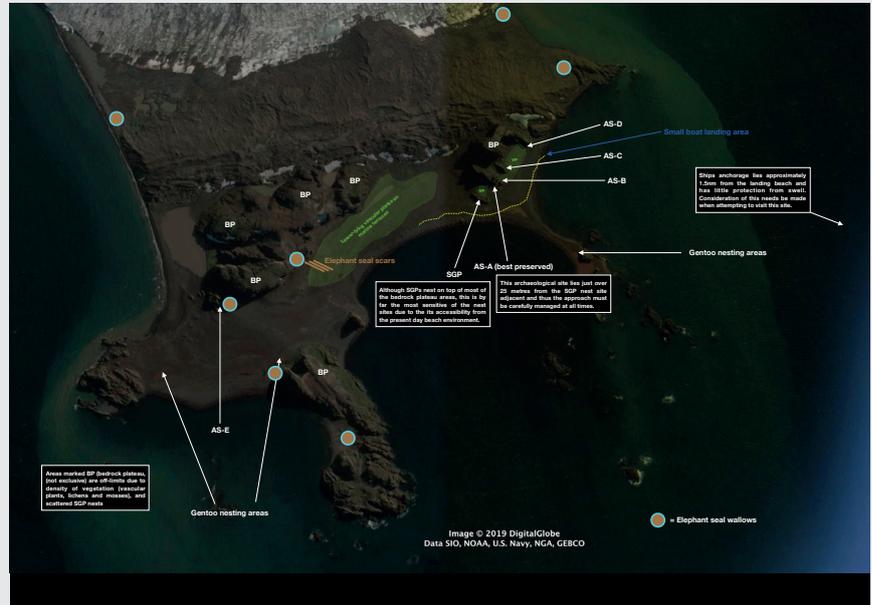
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visitor site guide



Key Features

- Elephant Seals
- Southern Giant Petrels
- Excellent scenery
- Long walks
- Sealer Remains



Description

TOPOGRAPHY

Rotch Glacier - gentle slopes onto the proglacial terrain in the central area, with calving ice cliffs to the east and west. Snow algae at or near the margins, and giant petrels, chinstrap penguins and Weddell seals observed also.

Proglacial terrain - alluvial fans, patterned ground, kettle lakes (mostly west), mosses, elephant seal wallows both in the east and west portions. Often giant petrels and chinstrap penguins are observed in this area from the moraine.

Moraine - this is the highest area of land on the point. There are two major ridges, approximately 45-55m high. The innermost ridge is more unstable and active than the seaward southern ridge.

FAUNA

Confirmed breeders: Giant petrels, Gentoo penguins, Antarctic terns, skuas.

Suspected breeders: Chinstrap penguins.

Hauling out: Elephant seals in at least 6 haul out wallows; Antarctic fur seals; Weddell seals; Leopard seals.

FLORA

Vascular plants: *Deschampia antarctica*, *Colobanthus quitensis*

Lichens: *Usnea antarctica*, *Usnea aurantiaco-atra*, *Rhizocarpon geographicum*, *Caloplaca regalis*, *Xanthoria elegans*, *Haematomma erythroma*

Mosses: *Andreae gainii*, *Sanionia sp.*, *Andreae depressinervis*

OTHER

A site of historic and cultural interest is located 80-100m to the northwest of the landing, consisting of the remains of a sealer's hut dated to the mid-1800's. There are 5 early sealer sites of significant interest with locations described in the satellite map provided. Site marked AS-A is the best preserved (a photograph is provided in addition to the description in the map). All remains lie at the foot of bedrock plateaus amongst the most elevated of the marine terraced areas and utilise rock walls or natural caves to help enclose the living or working spaces from the environment.



Visitor Impact

KNOWN IMPACTS

None.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Disturbance of wildlife, damage to the sealer remains.

Landing Requirements

SHIPS

Maximum two ships a day, of which no more than one may be Category 2.

VISITORS

Maximum number of passengers at any time, exclusive of expedition guides and leaders: 100

Number of visitors per guide: 1:20.

Visitor Area

LANDING AREA

Landing site on the southern side of a small, SE facing point on the southwest shore of Livingston Island. The beach consists of mixed sized pebbles, rocks and boulders. Beach is moderately shelved, with several underwater holes located within the landing zone making small boat catching challenging should swell conditions necessitate a stern landing.

Relative care must be exercised on the approach to the east landing area as there are reefs and shoal areas extend far out to sea. These are visible on the chart (e.g. Enchantress Rocks) and have only allowed a closest anchorage of 1.5nm away.

Once inside the bay area of the landing beach the sea floor is mostly sandy. The beach itself is shallow sand and the break of waves is therefore influenced heavily by the tide.

CLOSED AREA

- The moraine area where several southern giant petrels nest;
- The glacier front, which contains very soft and potentially dangerous ground;
- Several rocky promontories and buttresses back the beach, housing nesting Southern Giant Petrels;
- Entry into and onto the sealers remains.

GUIDED WALKING AREA

1. Flat walk towards elephant seal wallows 200m to the west of the preferred landing. However, care needs to be taken by several rocky promontories and buttresses back the beach, housing nesting Southern Giant Petrels.
2. A short hike where wildlife and cultural remains are within short, easy walking distance.

Special Notes:

Care needs to be taken in marking an accepted walking route.

In the later season Moulting gentoo penguins congregate around AS-A which can make access to this feature difficult. This is, zonally, very specific and does not affect access from the landing beach to other areas of this large site.

FREE ROAMING AREA

Near Landing Site Only, any travel away from the landing site should be on a well marked path and led by expedition guides.



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.
- Be careful near Antarctic fur seals, they may be aggressive.
- Stay clear of – and do not venture on — loose scree slopes.
- 15 metres minimum from Elephant seal wallows
- 25 metres minimum from nesting giant petrels

CAUTIONARY NOTES

- Evidence of rockfall and landslides in the bedrock plateau areas and moraine systems, respectively.
- Surf conditions at the beach can make landings difficult.
- Mosses, lichens, and the native Antarctic grass are abundant and easily disturbed.
- Expedition Staff leading walks must ensure that walkers stick to the beach and that self-lead walking routes are properly flagged.
- Historic site must not be disturbed.
- General care should be taken everywhere, including on the moraine and proglacial terrain due to vegetation (vascular in the former and mosses in the latter) taking hold.