

Useful Island (Draft)

Possible landing site:
64° 43' S; 62° 52' 02" W

IAATO

visitor site guide



Key Features

- Gentoo and Chinstrap penguins
- Elevated viewpoint with navigational marker
- Small boat cruising



Description



TOPOGRAPHY

The channel between Useful Island and Useless Island offers major protection from the wind and swell. The island offers the possibility of walking in flat terrain covered with snow and observe gentoo penguins, other seabirds and occasionally seals, while a hike to a viewpoint adjacent to a navigational mark offers a rather unique view of the Gerlache Strait, Ronge Island on the east and Anvers Island including Mount Francais on the west. Near the top, Chinstrap penguins and Brown Skuas nest on the bare rocks.

Landing is in a small cove. Depending on the ice accumulation and tides, it can be inside the cove or on the tip of the cove. Flat rocks allow a relatively easy embarkation/disembarkation from small boats.



If ice accumulation in the channel between Useful and Useless Islands is too much to conduct a landing, it is possible to land on the northern side of the island instead.

Granite Rocks.

FAUNA

Confirmed breeders: Gentoo penguin, Chinstrap penguins, Brown skua, Snowy sheathbill, Wilson's storm petrel.

Present: Kelp gull, Snow petrel, Adelie penguin, Southern giant petrel, Northern giant petrel, Antarctic shag, Weddell seal, Crabeater seal, Southern Elephant seal, Humpback whale, Antarctic Minke whale, Killer whale.

FLORA

Mosses and lichens.

Visitor Impact

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Possible disturbance of wildlife.

Landing Requirements

SHIPS*

Max passengers onboard: 200

Ships per day: 3

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

**It may be necessary to lower visitor numbers onshore below 100 (exclusive of guides) to maintain distance from wildlife



LANDING AREA

A series of rocks and ice in the channel are present. Scouting for good conditions before landing is recommended. Low tide conditions may affect accessibility of possible landing sites.

Early in the season, there is plenty of room to create a path away from the penguins. When the snow melts, generally later in the season, there is a small sub-colony with proximity to the landing. Maintain adequate distance from wildlife by clearly marking a route from the landing to main visitor area where visitors do not stop.

As soon as passing the first rookeries, a clear path up to the viewpoint and to other rookeries north from the landing site are easily accessible. Halfway to the viewpoint, some areas might be challenging and slippery for passengers.

GUIDED WALKING AREA

The route to the viewpoint must be assessed according to the snow-ice conditions. The route to the viewpoint and/or navigational aid can be slippery due to rocks and ice and must be evaluated by guides before creating a route for visitors.

Visitor Area

VISITOR SAFETY

Evaluate the entirety of walking routes for slip and fall hazards due to rocks, ice, and weather conditions (i.e. fog).

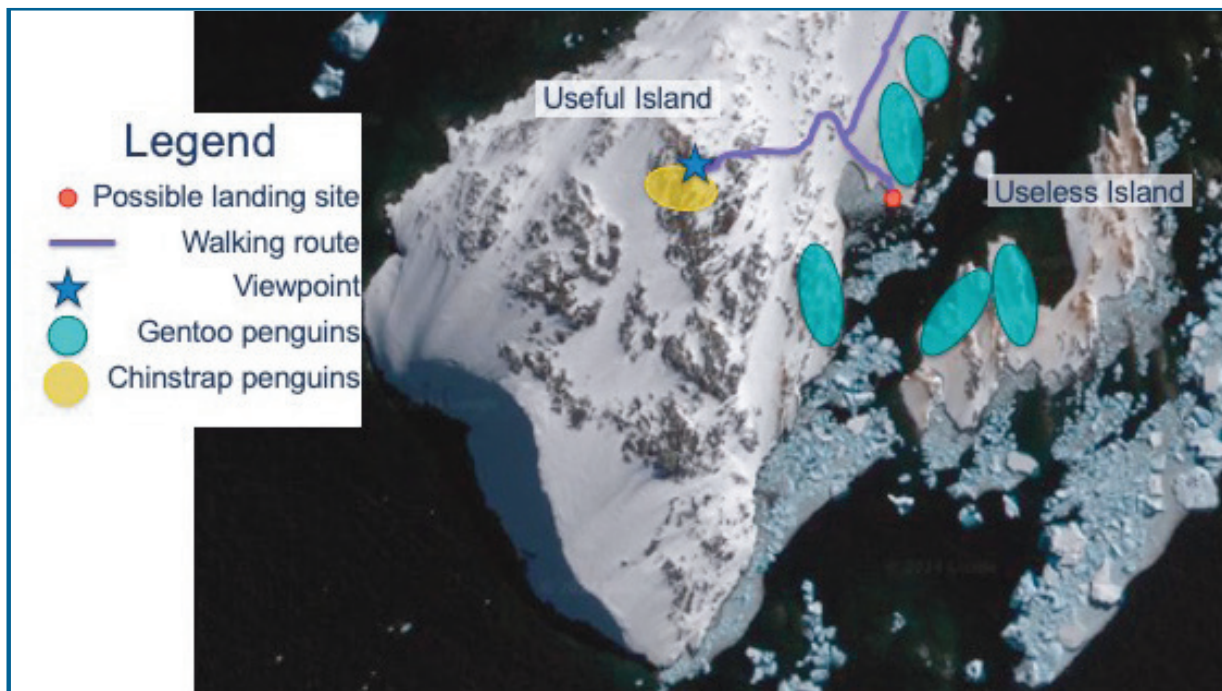
When operating amongst sea ice or icebergs, be vigilant to local sea and wind currents. Be alert to ice movement in relation to your operation and how it may affect both vessel and shore operations

Be aware that grounded icebergs will experience a gravitational change with tidal variation. This makes them more unpredictable and more likely to calve or break up.

Be aware that a collapsing iceberg can cause a huge breaking wave and ice fragments can move remarkably quickly over a large distance. Be prepared. Anchoring close to ice is not advisable, instead maintain a watch and keep your engine running.

SEASONALITY

Early in the season, snow allows to access to the island in an easier way. Later in the season, less snow, and proximity to wildlife can difficult the operation at the landing site. The presence of icebergs in the channel may present as a difficulty to operate on the island.



Historical Information

A low, circular island, ice-free in summer, measuring about 900 m by 525 m, and with regular geological relief, 3 km W of Rongé Island, with a string of rocks between, in Gerlache Strait, off Andvord Bay, on the Danco Coast, on the W coast of Graham Land. Discovered and roughly charted in Feb. 1898, by BelgAE 1897-99. Re-surveyed by the Discovery Investigations in 1927, it appears (as Useful Island) on their 1929 chart, the descriptive name probably having been in use for some years by whalers in the area.