



Site Guidelines

for Tour Ship Visits to Rothera Research Station

Introduction

Rothera is located at 67° 34' S, 068° 08' W on Adelaide Island to the west of the Antarctic Peninsula. It is operated by the British Antarctic Survey, which is a component of the UK Natural Environment Research Council. The station is occupied all year round. During winter (April to October) 18 people keep the station running and continue the science programme. In the summer (November to March) the station is very busy with over one hundred scientists and support personnel in residence. Rothera is the hub for aircraft operations in support of the BAS science programme. In recent summers BAS scientists have been deployed to locations throughout the Antarctic continent.

General Information

- Rothera is an active scientific research station; people will be working during your visit.
- Aircraft may use the runway at any time of the day or night. Visitors must not access the runway.
- Rothera operates using the South American and Falkland Island time zone i.e. UTC minus three hours.

There are many ways to contact Rothera:

By email: rbc@bas.ac.uk to contact the Base Commander

By phone: Inmarsat 01223221670 (Comms Room)
Iridium 00 88 16314 47977 (Comms Room)
00 44 1223 221 672 (Base Commanders Office)

By radio: HF 7775 USB & 5080 USB when there are aircraft operating.
VHF Channel 1 & Channel 16

Site Guidelines

Recommendation XVIII-1 (1994) of the Antarctic Treaty outlines the general standards expected by visitors. The following guidelines specific to Rothera Research Station supplement that Recommendation.

Guidelines for Expedition Staff

Two tour ship visits per year are accepted at the station. These must be pre-booked through IAATO following the guidance laid down in BAS document "Procedures for Tourist or Non Governmental Expeditions Requesting a Visit to a British Antarctic Survey Research Station or Historic Site". This document is readily available from IAATO.

Accepted ships should confirm their intentions with the Rothera Base Commander two weeks prior to the visit. This communication should detail the numbers of passengers plus ships crew coming ashore. At this point it can also be useful to commence dialogue to ensure the passengers get the maximum value from their visit to the station. 48 hours prior to the visit ships should give final confirmation of their intentions.

Generally ship visits should last no more than one half of a working day, e.g. a morning or an afternoon visit. For vessels with larger numbers of passengers we can discuss how best to achieve a successful visit.

During the summer the standard working day for the majority of Rothera personnel follows the pattern: breakfast completed by 08:30, lunch 13:00 to 14:00, evening meal 18:30 to 19:30. Whenever possible we like to give the station personnel a day off on a Sunday. It is helpful if visits do not interfere with the station routines.

There is a wharf at the south of the station which this is the preferred point for landing. If ships are unable to come directly alongside the wharf then access from small boats will be up a pilot ladder. In conditions of heavy swell or dense brash, or when passengers are unable to climb a ladder, it might be better to land on the beach to the north of the station. Prevailing conditions can be discussed with the Rothera BC (Base Commander) immediately prior to the visit.



The introduction of non-native species is a major threat to Antarctic ecosystems. As a result, the British Antarctic Survey has implemented biosecurity measures for all visitors arriving at Rothera. All visitors to Rothera Research Point shall scrub their footwear in a disinfectant solution before commencing their visit. Footwear and clothing of all visitors shall be free of soil, seeds, and any other organic material before landing. Particular attention shall be paid to all Velcro®, footwear, gaiters, pockets, turn-ups in trousers and hoods in jackets. Prior to landing, all luggage and equipment to be brought ashore (such as daypacks and camera bags) must be thoroughly inspected. Special attention must be given to seams and pockets. Daypacks and camera bags must be brushed out to remove all soil, seeds and organic material before landing. To ensure compliance, Rothera station management reserved the right to randomly inspect visitors and crew as they come ashore.

To ensure the visitors get the most from their visit they should be split into groups with a maximum of ten people per group. Additionally each group should be accompanied by a tour guide from the vessel. A Rothera station member will lead the group around the station. It is not possible for visitors to enter station buildings unaccompanied. No more than four groups should be touring the station at any one time.

A nominated representative of the station will give each shore party a safety brief immediately on landing. Alternatively, if feasible, it might be preferable for the representative to give this brief aboard the ship addressing all the visitors at the same time.

Guidelines for Visitors

- Rothera is our workplace but it is also our home; please respect this.
- Smoking is strictly prohibited inside any building; please use the bins provided to dispose of cigarette butts.

Antarctic Specially Protected Area No 129

The northern tip of Rothera point has been designated an Antarctic Specially Protected Area (ASPA). The UK Government asked that the area be designated as an ASPA in order to conduct a study of the effect of Rothera station

- Please clean your footwear before entering the buildings.
- Please stay with your group during your visit, do not wander off or enter buildings unaccompanied. Refrain from picking up or touching things unless your BAS guide advises you otherwise.

Shop and Post Office

The station shop and post office will open for the visit. The shop sells items such as T-shirts, caps, badges and post cards. Stamps and first day covers can also be purchased. The shop takes GBP, USD and Euros, but does not accept credit cards. It is possible to post letters and cards; they will go north from the station on the next scheduled flight. We can advise on the likely date of this at the time of the visit.

Walking around Rothera Point

It is possible to take a walk around Rothera Point. The distance is just less than two kilometres. The terrain varies considerably with time of year and prevailing weather.

Early in the summer the walk will be mostly on snow, by mid summer it will mostly be over rock. At any time of year you will have to negotiate patches of ice.

A fit person walking with a sense of purpose will take approximately forty minutes. Those wishing to appreciate the scenery and wildlife should allow between one and one half hours. Stout footwear is essential.

A person used to walking in the countryside off prepared paths will not find the walk difficult but the elderly or infirm might well find it a challenge. The Rothera BC can advise at the time of the visit, station personnel can be made available to lead this walk.

Wildlife

Rothera does not boast the abundance of Antarctic species that can be seen in some other localities. However, it can still be possible to enjoy very good views of the mammals and birds that are in residence. Species that are likely to be encountered include:

- Weddell Seal (*Leptonychotes weddelli*)
- Crabeater Seal (*Lobodon carcinophagus*)
- Fur Seal (*Arctocephalus gazella*) late summer only
- Adelie Penguin (*Pygoscelis adeliae*)
- Antarctic Tern (*Sterna vittata*)
- Wilsons Storm Petrel (*Oceanites oceanicus*)
- Dominican (Kelp) Gull (*Larus dominicanus*) two or three pairs breed
- South Polar Skua (*Catharacta maccormickii*) around fifteen pairs breed
- Blue-eyed Shag (*Phalacrocorax atriceps*)

on the local environment. Access to the area is by permit issued to named individuals under the UK Antarctic Act (1994; 2013) or by another national authority. Access to the ASPA without a permit is not allowed under any circumstances.

If fur seals are encountered they should be given a wide berth as they may be playful by nature and may chase people. Fur seals will bite humans if they get the chance, resulting in potentially serious wounds.



History

The Adelaide coast was first sighted from the vessel Tula in February 1832. Master John Biscoe named the land after Queen Adelaide, wife of King William IV of Great Britain. In 1909 the area of Marguerite Bay was visited by French explorer Dr Jean Charcot and the yacht Pourquoi Pas, you will notice that many geographical features bear French names. It was not until the British Graham Land Expedition of 1934–37 that Adelaide was finally confirmed to be an island.

From 1945 British exploration in Antarctica was conducted by the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (FIDS) and in 1962 this organisation was re-named the British Antarctic Survey. FIDS explored the islands, mountains and glaciers surrounding Marguerite Bay and established Horseshoe Island Station, which was occupied from 1955 to 1960. During the winter of 1957 John Rothera and Peter Gibbs crossed the sea ice and surveyed what is now known as Rothera Point. The UK established and operated out of Adelaide Island Station from 1961 to 1977, this station still exists as the Chilean summer-only Teniente Luis Carvajal Villaroel Antarctic Base. The British Antarctic Survey transferred their operations to Rothera in 1975 as this location offered a better flat surfaced glacier for the ski equipped aircraft that had become essential for furthering scientific work and exploration.

Additionally, the waters of Ryder Bay are much calmer for transferring cargo from ships.

At the start of the 1990's the runway was constructed, enabling the landing of larger-wheeled aircraft. An air-bridge using a de Havilland Dash 7 aircraft has operated ever since with regular summer flights connecting the station to Stanley (Falkland Islands) and Punta Arenas (Chile).

In 2005 a re-development programme commenced, the aim being to replace the ageing wooden buildings with modern ones. Much of this work has been completed, but further projects are on-going. Improvements have been made in energy management and the buildings are now more suited to the occupants needs in the twenty first century.

Further Information

Please visit the British Antarctic Survey website at: www.antarctica.ac.uk

Rothera Research Station in late winter.

