



Barrientos Island (Aitcho Islands)

62°24'S, 59°47'W - North entrance to English Strait
between Robert and Greenwich Islands

Key features

- Gentoo and Chinstrap Penguins
- Southern Elephant Seals
- Geological features
- Southern Giant Petrels
- Vegetation



Description

TOPOGRAPHY

This 1.5km island's north coast is dominated by steep cliffs, reaching a height of approximately 70 metres, with a gentle slope down to the south coast. The eastern and western ends of the island are black sand and cobbled beaches. Columnar basalt outcrops are a notable feature of the western end.

FAUNA

Confirmed breeders: Gentoo penguins (*Pygoscelis papua*), chinstrap penguins (*Pygoscelis antarctica*), southern giant petrels (*Macronectes giganteus*), kelp gulls (*Larus dominicanus*), and skuas (*Catharacta* spp.).

Suspected breeders: Blue-eyed shags (*Phalacrocorax atriceps*) and Wilson's storm-petrels (*Oceanites oceanicus*).

Regularly haul out: Weddell seals (*Leptonychotes weddellii*), southern elephant seals (*Mirounga leonina*), and from late December, Antarctic fur seals (*Arctocephalus gazella*).

FLORA

The entire centre of the island is covered by a very extensive moss carpet. Lichens *Xanthoria* spp., *Caloplaca* spp. and other crustose lichen species are present. The green alga *Prasiola crispa* is widespread.

Visitor Impact

KNOWN IMPACTS

The erosion of multiple footpaths through vegetation between the eastern and western ends of the island.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Further damage to the vegetation and disturbance of wildlife, particularly southern giant petrels.

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 guide per 20 visitors. No visitors ashore between 22:00hrs and 04:00hrs (local time). This is in order to establish a resting period for the wildlife.

Visitor Area

LANDING AREA

Primary: eastern end of the island; landing either on the sand beach to the north, or on the cobbled southern beach.

Secondary: northern shore of the western end of the island, with easiest access at high water.

CLOSED AREAS

Closed Area A: Monitoring sites for chinstrap penguins above and southeast of the eastern landing area.

Closed Area B: Central part of the island covered by a very extensive moss carpet (with the exception of the designated walking route) and the northern cliffs where southern giant petrels nest.

Closed Area C: Knoll on the southwestern tip of the island where southern giant petrels nest.

GUIDED WALKING AREAS

Only walk through Closed Area B if you can clearly recognise the designated route, which runs over the rocks along the shoreline at the eastern end, and along a narrow gravel stream bed through the vegetation. This route should only be used by closely guided groups of no more than 10 visitors. Only one group should follow the stream bed at a time, taking extreme care not to trample the edges of the vegetation.

FREE ROAMING AREAS

Visitors can roam freely, but under supervision, anywhere except the closed or guided walking areas.

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

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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. When on the same level as, or higher than, nesting southern giant petrels maintain a precautionary distance of at least 50 metres. Increase this distance if any change in the birds' behaviour is observed. Be careful near Antarctic fur seals, they may be aggressive. Do not walk on any vegetation.

CAUTIONARY NOTES

Stay clear of cliffs and vertical walls and stacks as these are prone to rock falls and slides.



Barrientos Island western landing area



Barrientos Island eastern landing area



Only walk through Closed Area B if you can clearly recognise the route



The centre of Barrientos Island is covered by a very extensive moss carpet

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