

Port Charcot, Booth Island

65°04'S, 64°02'W

Key features

- Historic site of Charcot's 1st French Antarctic Expedition (HSM 28)
- All three pygoscelid species of penguins nest on the island
- Glacial scenery



Description

TOPOGRAPHY

Port Charcot is a 2.4km wide bay at the north of Booth Island, an 8km long Y-shaped island forming the western side of the Lemaire Channel. This bay lies on the north-western arm of the "Y" shore of Booth Island. From the southern beach of the NW arm (Salpêtrière Bay) the site rises through a gentle slope leading to the north to a 50m hill where remains of the Charcot's expedition can be found. On the northern shore there is a small cobbled bay, Français Cove, on the north shore sheltered by two small offshore rocky islets and a series of rocky outcrops surround the bay.

FAUNA

Confirmed breeders: Adèlie penguins (*Pygoscelis adeliae*), chinstrap penguins (*Pygoscelis antarctica*), gentoo penguins (*Pygoscelis papua*), kelp gulls (*Larus dominicanus*), Antarctic terns (*Sterna vittata*), snowy sheathbills (*Chionis alba*), blue-eyed shag (*Phalacrocorax atriceps*) Wilson's storm petrel (*Oceanites oceanicus*), south polar skuas (*Catharacta mcmormicki*) and skuas (*Catharacta* spp.). Weddell seals (*Leptonychotes weddellii*) and Antarctic fur seals (*Arctocephalus gazella*) frequently haul out and crabeater seals (*Lobodon carcinophagus*) and leopard seals (*Hydrurga leptonyx*) are regularly sighted in the vicinity.

FLORA

Snow algae may be extensive in late summer. Biota noted include: Antarctic hairgrass (*Deschampsia antarctica*), various moss species, algae including *Prasiola crispa* and lichens including *Xanthoria* spp., *Caloplaca* spp. and *Verrucaria* spp.

OTHER

The location is the overwintering site of the French Antarctic Expedition, 1903-1905 onboard the *Français* under the command of Jean-Baptiste Charcot. Remains from the expedition are still visible in the form of a cairn with a wooden pillar (designated HSM 28), the stone built magnetic hut, the wreck of a tender and other artefacts.

Visitor impacts

KNOWN IMPACTS

None know.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Disturbance of wildlife. Disturbance of historic artefacts.

Landing Requirements

SHIPS*

Ships* carrying 500 or fewer passengers (however, note visitor restrictions below). One ship at a time. Maximum two ships per day (midnight to midnight), of which no more than one can carry over 200 passengers.

VISITORS

No more than 100 visitors ashore at any time, exclusive of expedition guides and leaders.

Visitor Area

LANDING AREA

Primary Landing: Salpêtrière Bay, from which it is a short walk across the saddle to Port Charcot. Landings can also be made into the small cobbled bay of Français Cove, but the bay is shallow and rocky at low tide.

CLOSED AREAS

The steep rocky area on the north side of Jeanne Hill. The south side of Jeanne Hill is not closed but is crevassed and dangerous.

GUIDED WALKING AREAS

It is recommended that walks to the cairn are led by guides, to avoid steep, slippery slopes below.

FREE ROAMING AREAS

Visitors may roam freely in the area between the primary landing site in Salpêtrière Bay northwards across the saddle to Port Charcot and east towards the penguin colonies at the foot of Jeanne Hill, taking into account the cautionary notes below.

* 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 5m from wildlife and give animals the right-of-way. Increase this distance if any change in behaviour is observed. Do not touch, disturb or move historic artefacts.

Avoid walking in the deep snow pathways created by penguins.

CAUTIONARY NOTES

The sea-area in the vicinity of Port Charcot is poorly surveyed.

Care needs to be taken in the vicinity of historic artefacts (see map), some of which may be partially hidden by snow.

The permanent ice slopes are crevassed and dangerous. These areas should only be accessed by those with suitable alpine experience and training, and using suitable equipment (e.g. roped access). Caution must be used when walking close to the snow overhangs east of the Salpêtrière Bay landing site, which may be unstable.

