

FORTUNA BAY

Visitor Management Plan

v2015



View towards Fortuna Bay showing braided river

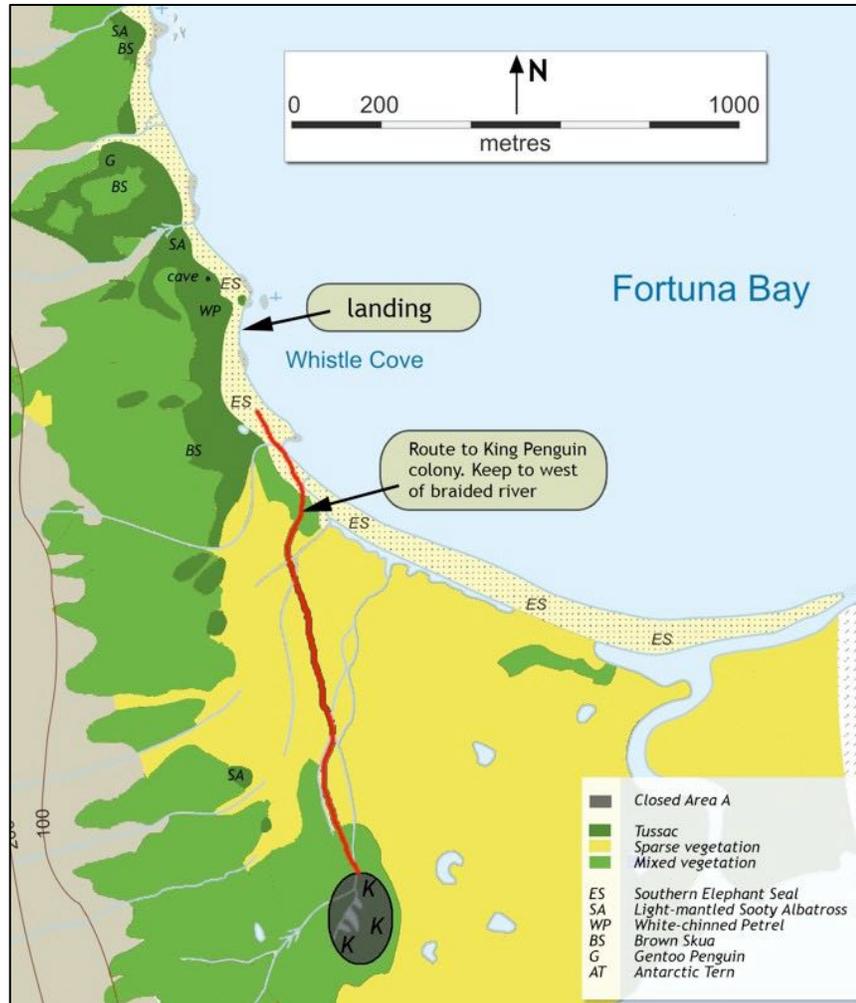


View towards king penguin colony and König Glacier

FORTUNA BAY VISITOR MANAGEMENT PLAN



LOCATION



Sketch Map. Not for navigation

- Latitude: 54°26` S
- Longitude: 36°11` W

North-south running fjord to the west of Stromness Bay.



KEY FEATURES

- King penguins
- Elephant seals

DESCRIPTION

○ Topography

Fortuna Bay is a 6km long north-south aligned fjord. The western shore is dominated by the jagged peaks of Breakwind Ridge. A wide glacial outwash plain, laced by a network of braided streams, lies at the head of the fjord leading up to the Konig Glacier. A large meltwater lake is located at the snout of the glacier, from which a wide, deep, fast flowing river bisects the beach about midway along its length.

○ Fauna

Confirmed breeders: king penguin (*Aptenodytes patagonicus*), gentoo penguin (*Pygoscelis papua*), light-mantled sooty albatross (*Phoebastria palpebrata*), white-chinned petrel (*Procellaria aequinoctialis*), snowy sheathbill (*Chionis alba*), brown skua (*Stercorarius antarcticus*), Antarctic tern (*Sterna vittatae georgiae*), elephant seal (*Mirounga leonina*), fur seal (*Arctocephalus gazella*).

Suspected breeders: South Georgia pintail (*Anas georgica georgica*).

Habitat restoration projects to remove introduced land mammals commenced in 2013 with the removal of reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus*), and the brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*). Any subsequent evidence live rodents or reindeer must be reported to the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI).

○ Flora

The glacial outwash plain is dominated by sparse lowland fellfield interspersed with patches of moist lowland fellfield, short mixed grassland and Festuca fellfield mosaic. The lower coastal slopes of Breakwind Ridge host primarily short Festuca grassland and mire and bog communities which merge with tussac and short mixed grassland on the gentler rolling areas behind the beach at Whistle Cove. Areas of reindeer-grazed tussac and burnet are expected to recover rapidly.

○ Other

A few isolated rocky outcrops extend from the landing beach in Whistle Cove out into reefs submerged at high water.



VISITOR IMPACTS

- **Known Impacts**

None known

- **Potential Impacts**

Disturbance of wildlife.

LANDING REQUIREMENTS

- **Ships ***

Ships carrying 500 or fewer passengers. One ship at a time.

Maximum 3 ships per day (midnight to midnight) of which no more than 2 vessels carrying more than 200 passengers.

- **Visitors**

No more than 100 visitors ashore at any time, exclusive of expedition guides and leaders. A minimum of one experienced guide per 20 visitors.

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



VISITOR AREAS

○ Landing Area

Landings are possible anywhere along the gravel beach on the western shore, with Whistle Cove providing the best shelter from any northerly swells.

○ Closed Areas

Closed Area A: king penguin colony and a 10m buffer zone around its perimeter.

○ Guided Walking Areas

Hikes to the king penguin colony, c.1.5 km from the landing beach, should stay to the west of the braided river, avoiding Antarctic tern nesting areas and moulting king penguins.

○ Free Roaming Areas

Beach area between Whistle Cove and the large river outlet midway along the head of the bay.



View from sealers cave. Be careful not to disturb the rockwall.



VISITOR CODE OF CONDUCT

○ Behaviour ashore

Walk slowly and carefully. Maintain a precautionary distance from wildlife and give animals the right-of-way. Increase your distance if any change in behaviour is observed.

Be alert to fur seals hidden in the tussac.

Be aware of, and avoid, nesting terns on the glacial outwash plain to south and east of the king colony.

Do not stray into the king penguin colony. Keep at least 10 m from the edge of the colony. Avoid the king penguin access routes between the colony and the beach. Take particular care not to disturb, or shift, moulting king penguins.

When lower beach area is crowded with wildlife particularly during elephant seal breeding period, visitors should be encouraged to stay on the upper beach area.

Visitors to the sealers' cave should be careful not to disturb the rock wall at the entrance or any other historic artefacts. Visitors should also avoid disturbing gentoos and skuas which nest on the slopes above the cave.

○ Cautionary notes

Landings at Fortuna Bay are possible in all but the roughest conditions. However, strong katabatic winds can descend from the Konig Glacier and other glaciers with little warning.

Exercise caution when crossing any rivers as the waters may be deep and fast flowing.

Minimise use of ship lights at nightfall to reduce risk of bird strikes and remain vigilant.

○ Biosecurity

All landings must comply with GSGSSI biosecurity measures and rigorous self-audit checks must be carried out prior to landing.

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