Minimum Impact Code

The primary responsibility of the Parks and Wildlife Service is to protect and manage the reserve with as little disturbance as possible to its natural state.

Macquarie Island is a Tasmanian State Reserve and is afforded protection of the highest order under the category of a Nature Reserve. It was declared a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in February 1978. As such, it is recognised as part of the international network of Biosphere Reserves. This network of samples of the world’s major ecosystem types is devoted to conservation of nature and to scientific research and provides a standard against which the effects of human impact on the environment can be measured.

All people going to Macquarie Island, whether tourists or expeditioners, are visitors: there are no permanent residents. The following guidelines are designed to protect the natural and cultural values of the reserve, retain scope for scientific research and provide a rare tourist opportunity. It is only with the cooperation of all visitors that the internationally acknowledged values of the reserve can be maintained.

Please thoroughly study and follow the following guidelines.

Permits are required to land on any part of the reserve

Tourist operators and private individuals should contact the department for the latest guidelines covering visits before going to the island. Vessels that arrive at the island unannounced will not be allowed to land people.

Tourist and private visits

Visits will be ship-based with landings permitted between 7 am and 7 pm at sites designated by the Service.

Officers of the Service will be available to assist visitors to understand the rich natural and cultural heritage of the reserve.

Quarantine precautions

One of the major concerns of visits, whether by tourists or expeditioners, is the possible introduction of exotic species to the reserve. Such introductions would at best reduce the scientific value of the reserve and at worst could devastate exposed native flora or fauna.

While procedures have been established for Australian Antarctic Division staff and tourist operators to safeguard their activities, it is the responsibility of individual expeditioners and tourists to guard against the introduction of exotic flora, fauna or agents. These agents cause disease if they are carried in with personal belongings.

When packing items to take or to be sent to the reserve, all articles and packing material must be clean. Cases and containers should not be left standing open for extended periods, as insects or seeds may be carried to the island this way.

Expeditioners should also advise relatives and friends who may send items to them during their stay on the island to take similar precautions during packing.

When moving between islands, or Antarctica and Macquarie Island, care must be taken not to transfer material from one area to another. All clothing, footwear and equipment must be thoroughly checked and cleaned before and after each separate landing. Remember those items, such as photographic tripods and camera bags, which come into contact with the ground, as they are easily overlooked.

Food produce

Avian food produce (i.e. poultry, eggs or egg powder) can transmit diseases to native birds. Such items must not be taken ashore by tourists or expeditioners. Antarctic Division guidelines for the use and disposal of poultry produce should be rigorously followed by expeditioners.

Food scraps must not be fed to wildlife.

Rubbish disposal

Tourists should take all rubbish back onboard ship with them after each landing. Expeditioners should follow the procedures for the disposal of rubbish set out by the Antarctic Division.

Toilets are not provided at any visitor sites for tourists
Scientific programs and collecting
Permits are required in order to conduct most scientific programs in the reserve. Otherwise the taking, possession or disturbance of wildlife, plant material, historical sites, artefacts, geological specimens or objects is not permitted.

Movement around wildlife
The apparent tameness of the wildlife is a somewhat superficial impression and scientific studies have shown that animals may be under stress even when they show no obvious reactions.

Rapid and/or unpredictable movements may cause considerable disturbance to the wildlife. Normally do not get closer than five metres to most wildlife. With fur seals the distance should be fifteen metres. Make sure that you do not get between them and the sea as they may make a sudden dash for the water.

Wildlife should not be touched. Care must be taken not to surround animals; even two people on opposite sides of an animal can cause distress.

The wandering albatross is now classified as an endangered species in Australia and expeditioners should not approach within 25 m.

Unless working under scientific permit, expeditioners should never enter a colony of breeding animals. Penguin walkways between the beaches and their breeding colonies should, as far as possible, be avoided by expeditioners.

Access and walking tracks
For tourist visits, access is restricted to formed tracks, walkways and beaches in the designated areas.

Expeditioners should use the beaches and the system of marked tracks around the island for excursions.

If absolutely necessary to leave a marked track or beach, care must be taken to avoid damage to vegetation and burrowing petrel sites. Avoid going directly up or down slopes as it can cause erosion grooves if this occurs too often in one site.

The feldmark plants are particularly vulnerable. Footprints in cushion plants can still be seen for many years after they were made and if the profile of the cushion is broken, wind erosion may destroy the plant. Walkers in these areas should keep to the open gravel patches.