Spert Island - Marine Only

Possible anchorage/drift position:
63°52'27"S – 60°58'34"W

IAATO visitor site guide

Key Features

- Small boat cruising
- Narrow, canyon-like straits, sea arches and tunnels
- Stranded icebergs.

Description

TOPOGRAPHY

Glacial processes have carved out numerous narrow canyon-like straits through the archipelago, and at least two sea arches/ tunnels, making for a fascinating small boat cruise. Added to this are some imposing rock formations and deep water close to the islands, that allows for massive icebergs to drift in and become stranded.

The Spert archipelago is made up of extrusive volcanic rock, predominantly basalt and andesite. It was formed up to 199 - 145 million years ago (Jurassic), making it part of the so-called Trinity Peninsula Volcanic Group. Numerous straits formed through glacial action and subsequent sea flooding separate the islands and islets. Open to the erosive power of large sea swells, some fine examples of sea arches and tunnels are present.

FAUNA

Confirmed breeders: Chinstrap penguin.

Present: Gentoo penguin, Cape petrel, Wilson's Storm-petrel, Snowy sheathbill, Brown skua, Kelp gull, Snow petrel, Antarctic shag, Antarctic tern, Antarctic fur seal, Weddell seal, Leopard seal.

Present offshore: Minke and Humpback whales.

FLORA

Antarctic hair grass – mostly on north-facing cliffs, also the western coast of the southern-most point. Moss spp. – some limited growth in the cracks of the shattered rock surface. Small amounts of lichens *Xanthoria* spp., *Caloplaca* spp. and *Usnea antarctica* on rock surfaces.

Landing Requirements

SHIPS*

Marine Only site.

Visitor Area

ACTIVITY AREA

Recommended for small boat cruising only.

Numerous rocks/shoals along narrow straits and in arch/tunnel, and especially between the rock towers off the north-western end of the island.

Swells occasionally break on some shoals just off the west coast of Spert Island with little warning, seemingly in safe, open water.

Limited beach/landing areas (landing discouraged).

VISITOR SAFETY

Rocks falling from cliffs. Especially when driving through tunnels, this is a risk.

Iceberg collapse and rolling, especially in confined spaces (channels, straits).

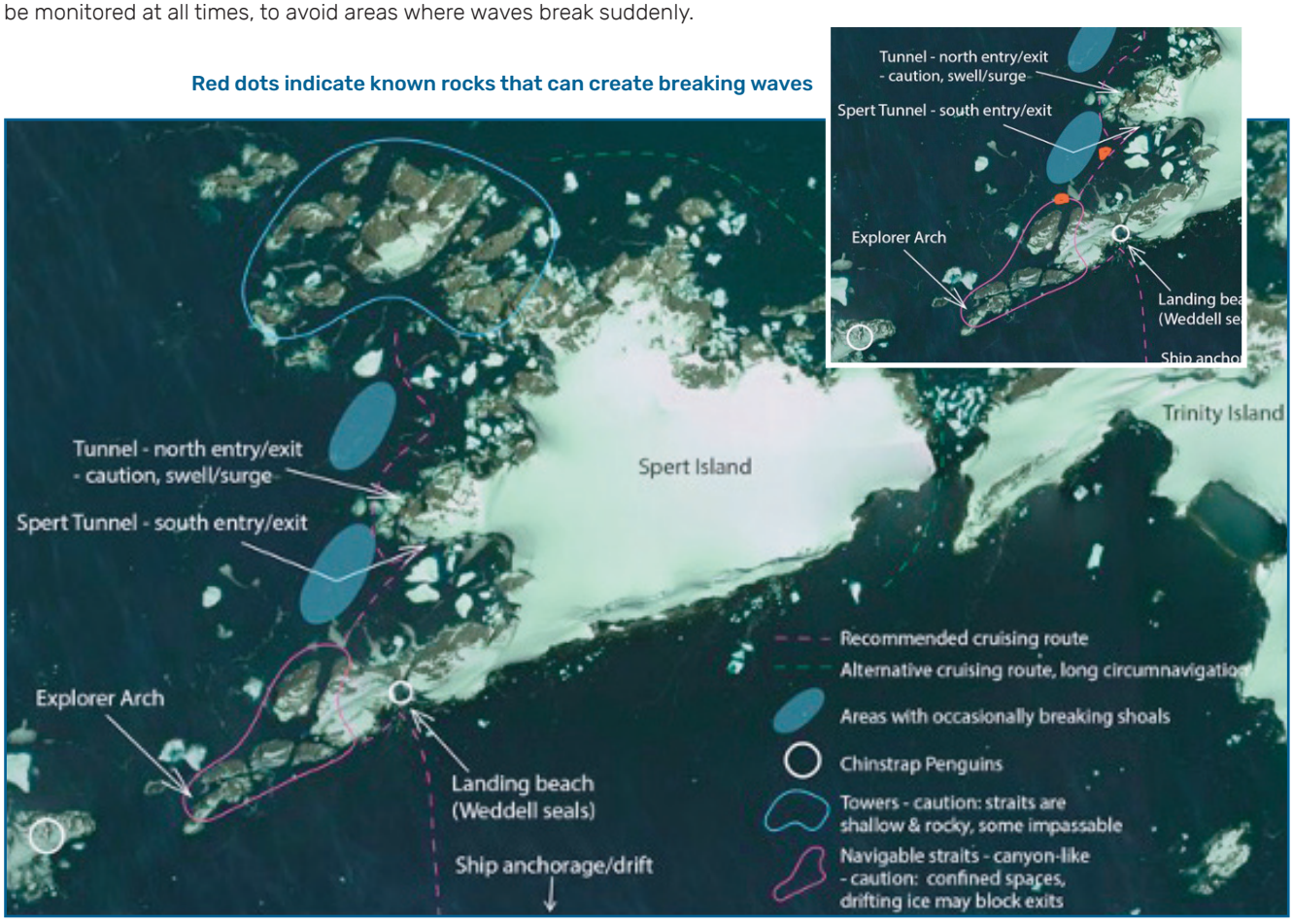
Large swells, breaking waves, and surge in narrow straits.

Experienced small boat driver recommended due to frequently challenging situations.

FREE ROAMING AREA

None. However, small boat drivers should avoid confined areas in the presence of sizeable pieces of ice. Swell and surge should be monitored at all times, to avoid areas where waves break suddenly.

Red dots indicate known rocks that can create breaking waves



Historical Information

Nordenskjöld's Swedish Antarctic Expedition (1901-04) charted the area; however, the island was only named in 1960 by the UK-APC for Sir Thomas Spert, Controller of the King's Ships in the time of King Henry VIII.