

PEBBLE ISLAND

A penguin paradise and exceptional wetland area



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PEBBLE ISLAND



The Falkland Islands archipelago lies 350km (280miles) to the east of the South American continent. It consists of two large islands, East and West Falkland, and more than 750 small islands and islets.



Pebble Island lies just off the north coast of West Falkland. It is the third largest offshore island in the archipelago at 10,622 ha (26,236 acres).

Pebble Island is reached by a 45 minute flight from Stanley or 30 minutes from Mount Pleasant Airport with the Falkland Islands Government Air Service (FIGAS). Zodiac landings can also be made from visiting cruise ships.

Accommodation

In the heart of the settlement is Pebble Island Lodge. Originally built as the farm manager's house in 1928, it was converted to a comfortable lodge in 1987.

The Nest has recently been renovated to a high standard and was FITB accredited in 2016 earning it 3 stars. All mod cons and centrally heated, it has one bedroom which can be a double or twin and there is a sofa bed in the living area. It sleeps 2 comfortably, 3-4 is cosy.

For bookings contact
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COVER PHOTO: Southern rockhopper penguins

About Pebble Island

Pebble Island is named after the unusual and attractive pebbles that were once abundant on some of its beaches. It is part of a group that also includes Rabbit Island and the Broken Island group, as well as Government, Pebble, White and Keppel islets. These were bought by John Markham Dean in 1869 who established a sheep farming company known as Dean Brothers, in whose family ownership remains today. For many years it was one of the most important wool producers on West Falkland.

The Island stretches 30 km (19 miles) from east to west, but is only about 7 km (4½ miles) at its widest point. The settlement and airstrip are located on a narrow isthmus close to spectacular Elephant Beach, the longest sand beach in the Falklands at 6.4 km (4 miles) – Pebble Island's alternative airstrip. Dune systems and rocky shores with low cliffs, are backed by gently undulating heathland, with large ponds.

There are three peaks west of the settlement: **First Mountain** – the highest – reaches 277 m (909 ft), **Middle Peak** 214 m (704 ft) and the western **Marble Mountain** 237 m (779 ft). The land to the east is low-lying with many large lakes and ponds, which attract a wide range of wildfowl and wading birds.

The island qualifies as an Important Bird Area (FK13), a global standard set by BirdLife International. Around 40 bird species have been recorded, including over 1,000 pairs of imperial cormorants that breed on Tamar Point, and several large colonies of **gentoo**, **Magellanic** and **southern rockhopper** penguins.

Eight of the Falkland endemic plants grow here, including **vanilla daisy** and **lady's slipper**.

Commerson's dolphins are regularly recorded at Green Rincon and in Elephant Bay, and the **Queen of the the Falklands fritillary** butterfly occurs on the heathlands.

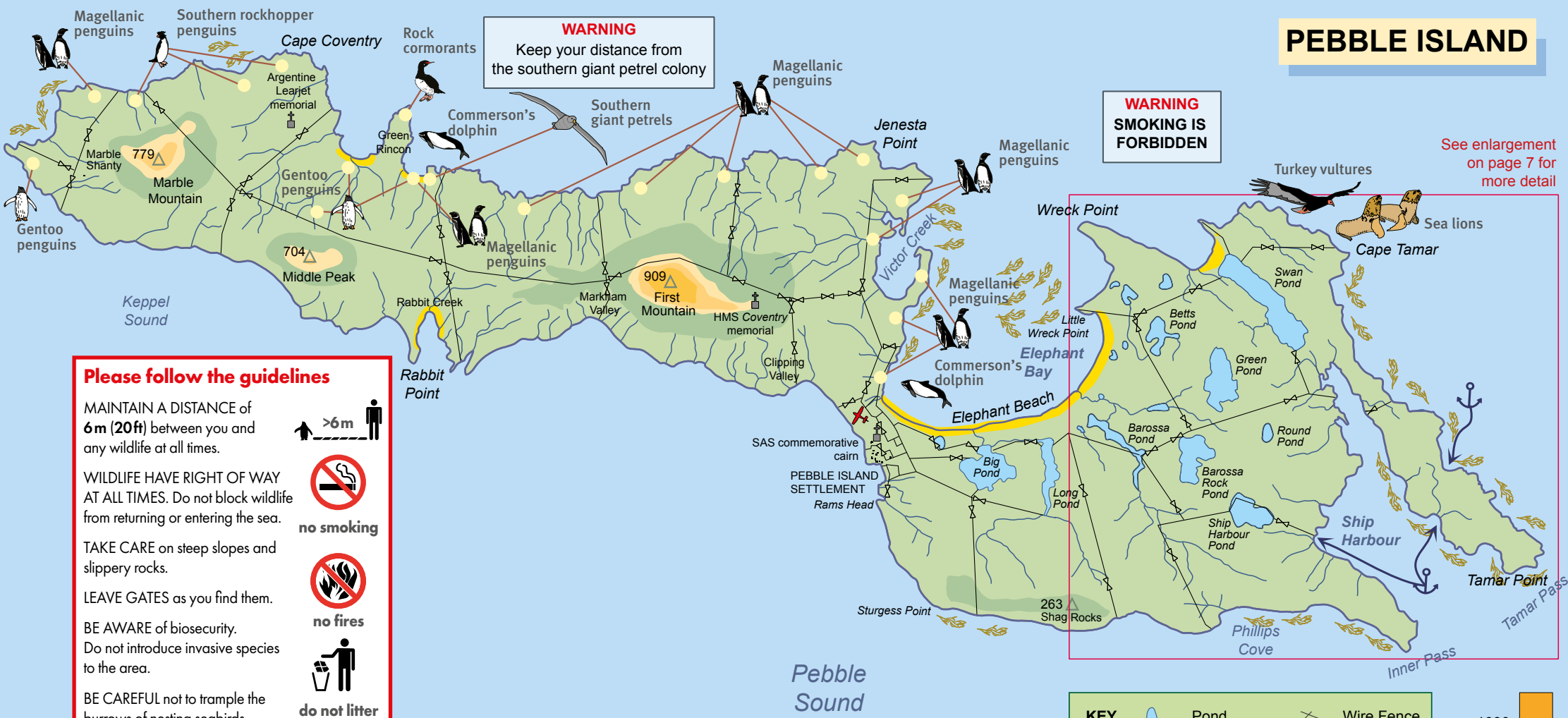


PEBBLE ISLAND

See enlargement on page 7 for more detail

WARNING
Keep your distance from the southern giant petrel colony

WARNING
SMOKING IS FORBIDDEN



Please follow the guidelines

MAINTAIN A DISTANCE of **6m (20ft)** between you and any wildlife at all times.

WILDLIFE HAVE RIGHT OF WAY AT ALL TIMES. Do not block wildlife from returning or entering the sea.

TAKE CARE on steep slopes and slippery rocks.

LEAVE GATES as you find them.

BE AWARE of biosecurity. Do not introduce invasive species to the area.

BE CAREFUL not to trample the burrows of nesting seabirds, particularly those of Magellanic penguins. Avoid walking across areas of high burrow density.

>6m

no smoking

no fires

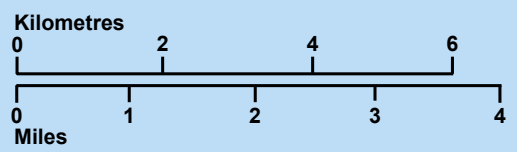
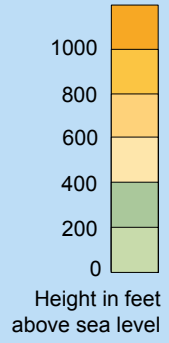
do not litter

no flash

LAMBING SEASON
The lambing season is from **October** to **December**. During this time visitors are asked to take extra care not to disturb ewes as they may abandon lambs if startled.

KEY

- Pond
- Stream
- Kelp Beds
- Wildlife Viewing Area
- Cruise Ship Anchorage
- Wire Fence
- Gate
- Airstrip
- Memorial



Rockhopper Penguins

Southern rockhopper penguins are the smallest of the five species of crested penguins and the most common Falkland penguin, breeding at 35 sites around the Islands.

The total number is 320,000 breeding pairs (2010 census), one of the largest populations of rockhoppers in the world.

Pebble Island is home to some 8,500 breeding pairs. The largest colony of around 5,200 pairs is located to the north of Marble Mountain, where a few **macaroni penguins** can also be found. Rockhopper and macaroni penguins sometimes interbreed, so Pebble is a good place to look for hybrid offspring.

The second largest rockhopper colony of 3,250 pairs is at Tamar Point, at the east end of the island. The birds return to these sites each year in early October, having spent the winter ranging across the waters of the Patagonian Shelf. The penguins feed on krill and squid in the rich marine waters surrounding the Falklands, pursuing their prey far out to sea and up to depths of 100m (328 ft). They depart on their winter migration, following moulting, in mid-April.

Two eggs are laid in a nest scrape lined with anything from small stones to vegetation and bones. The first egg is markedly smaller than the second which may be vulnerable to predation by skuas or even evicted from the nest when hatching. Crested penguins typically raise only one chick, however in the Falklands it is not unusual for some to raise two chicks in a good year. Incubation lasts just over 30 days. Following hatching, only the female feeds whilst the male guards the chick. After a month the chicks form loose crèches and both parents share the job of feeding the chick until fledging at the end of February.

Following the 2010 census, rockhopper penguin populations are considered stable in the Falklands. This species continues to be classed as Vulnerable by the IUCN and BirdLife International.



Southern rockhopper penguin



Macaroni penguin



Southern rockhopper x macaroni penguin hybrid

Pebble Island East

The eastern half of Pebble Island, with its ponds and lakes, is of great wildlife interest and conservation value. Some of the wetland areas are prone to drying out during very dry summers.

In 2000/01 a pair of coscoroba swans bred successfully in this area, the first Falkland record since 1860. Despite this, the coscoroba is still only scarce in the Falklands. Pebble Island East reportedly has one of the largest concentrations of black-necked swans in the Islands – 75–100 can be seen on the ponds during the summer. There are often sightings of rare visitors such as red shoveler and cinnamon teal.



Checklist of breeding waterfowl and waders

- White-tufted grebe
- Silvery grebe
- Black-crowned night heron
- Black-necked swan
- Kelp goose
- Upland goose
- Ruddy-headed goose
- Flying steamer duck
- Falkland steamer duck
- Chiloë wigeon
- Speckled teal
- Crested duck
- Yellow-billed pintail
- Silver teal
- Two-banded plover
- Rufous-chested dotterel
- Magellanic oystercatcher
- Blackish oystercatcher



Black-necked swan

Pebbles

The origin of the attractive pebbles found on the Island's beaches is unknown. Spectacular colours and patterns can be found. These pebbles are agates, silica that accumulated in the cavities left behind when gas escaped from volcanic lavas.

The agates are much harder and resistant to erosion than the lavas that allowed them to form, and so survive long after their host has vanished.

There is no lava in the Islands today so the pebbles must either be relics of a rock layer that has long since eroded away, or be washed up on the northern shores of the Islands from a source somewhere on the sea floor.

These attractive pebbles are now very rare due to over-collecting. If you happen to find some, please leave them for others to enjoy.



To prevent the spread of invasive species and diseases, you are asked to comply with a few simple measures when travelling around the islands: make sure all of your clothing, equipment and luggage is free from soil, animal faeces, seeds, insects and rodents, and scrub your footwear before each visit to a new wildlife site or seabird colony. If you have any questions about biosecurity, or wish to report diseased wildlife, please speak to the landowners or call the Department of Agriculture 27355 / Falklands Conservation 22247 for advice.

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Falklands Conservation works to conserve the wildlife of the Falkland Islands. To find out more about us and how you can support what we do, visit us at Jubilee Villas, Ross Road, Stanley or go to our website:

www.falklandsconservation.com

Information about other areas of outstanding wildlife and scenery, can be found in *A Visitor's Guide to the Falkland Islands*.



FALKLANDS CONSERVATION

Partnering with the local and international community to conserve the Falkland Islands' natural environment.

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www.falklandsconservation.com

Or contact ukadmin@conservation.org.fk for more options.

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