

Taylor Valley

77° 37.59' S, 163° 03.42' E - Southern Victoria Land, Ross Sea



Key features

- McMurdo Dry Valleys Antarctic Specially Managed Area (ASMA)
- Largest ice-free area in Antarctica
- Area of high scientific value for studies of long-term change
- Canada Glacier terminus
- Mummified seals
- Desert pavement, ventifacts and patterned ground
- Spectacular landscape



Description

TOPOGRAPHY

Largely flat, with two small hills on the southern boundary. The ice free ground has relatively undisturbed desert pavement and patterned ground. During the summer months there are moist soils and small ponds at the terminus of the glacier.

FAUNA

Invertebrates inhabit moss and algal communities in the zone, including *Arthropods*, *Tardigrades*, *Rotifers* and *Protozoa*. 'Mummified' (desiccated) seals provide important habitats for microflora and fauna.

FLORA

Sparse patches of moss (some of which are hard to see) and several species of freshwater algae and cyanobacteria.

OTHER

Designated as a Visitor Zone in the McMurdo Dry Valleys ASMA, allowing visits to the Area while protecting the surrounding environment.

Visitor Impact

KNOWN IMPACTS

Established tracks in the zone on the hills and around the helicopter landing site and minor tracking in the softer sediment around the margins of the pro-glacial ponds. There are monitoring and research markers, a marked helicopter landing site and a designated tent site in the zone.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Ground disturbance (e.g. development of further tracks, soil structure damage, rotor wash from helicopters), disturbance to flora and fauna and the introduction of species not native to the area.

Landing Requirements

HELICOPTERS

Landing is at the designated site in the Visitor Zone at 77° 37.59' S, 163° 03.42' E. The corners and centre of the landing pad are marked with yellow steel plates.

VISITORS

Visitors should stay within the designated zone to ensure the values of the surrounding environment are protected. No more than 100 visitors in the area at any time, exclusive of guides and leaders.

Visitor Area

LANDING AREA

The helicopter landing site is situated on the northeastern side of the Visitor Zone.

CLOSED AREAS

Areas outside of the Visitor Zone.

GUIDED WALKING AREAS

Tour operators should mark the track in the zone with temporary markers (e.g. flags). Visitors should walk in small guided groups on the existing track.

FREE ROAMING AREAS

None.

Visitor Code of Conduct

BEHAVIOUR ASHORE

Boots and equipment should be clean before visiting the site. Visitors should not leave the Visitor Zone and should stay on the tracks in guided groups. Take care not to walk on moist soils, vegetation, near ponds, or closer than 1m to mummified seals. Nothing is to be taken from the area or left in the area. All waste must be removed. Tents should only be used at the designated site near the helicopter landing site and are only to be used for safety. There is some science and monitoring equipment in the area, which should not be disturbed. Operators must be familiar with the Management Plan for the McMurdo Dry Valleys ASMA.

CAUTIONARY NOTES

Antarctic Specially Protected Area (ASPA) No. 131, Canada Glacier is approximately 1km from the Taylor Valley Visitor Zone. Care is needed to ensure that the correct landing site is located.

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