

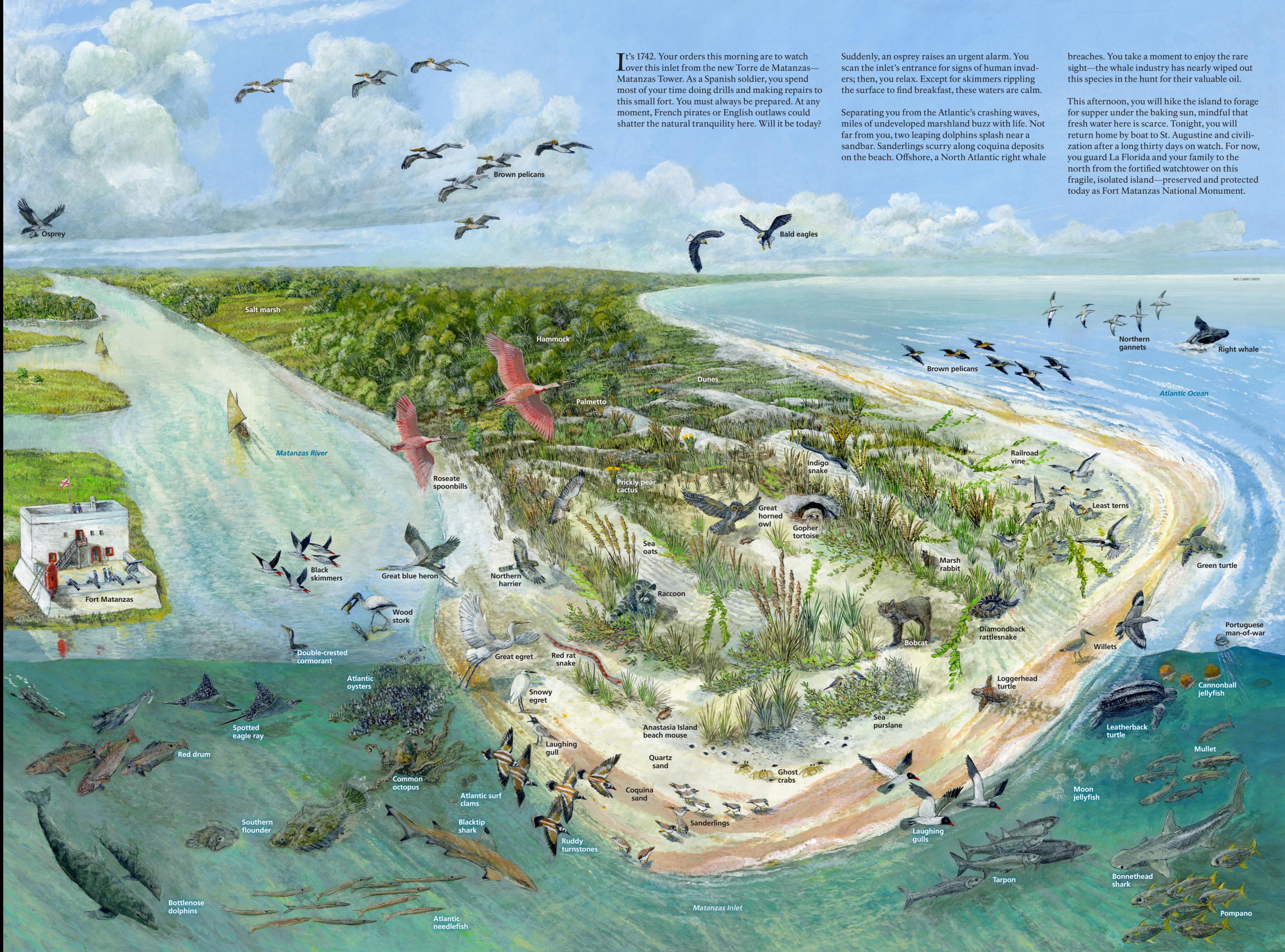
It's 1742. Your orders this morning are to watch over this inlet from the new Torre de Matanzas—Matanzas Tower. As a Spanish soldier, you spend most of your time doing drills and making repairs to this small fort. You must always be prepared. At any moment, French pirates or English outlaws could shatter the natural tranquility here. Will it be today?

Suddenly, an osprey raises an urgent alarm. You scan the inlet's entrance for signs of human invaders; then, you relax. Except for skimmers rippling the surface to find breakfast, these waters are calm.

Separating you from the Atlantic's crashing waves, miles of undeveloped marshland buzz with life. Not far from you, two leaping dolphins splash near a sandbar. Sanderlings scurry along coquina deposits on the beach. Offshore, a North Atlantic right whale

breaches. You take a moment to enjoy the rare sight—the whale industry has nearly wiped out this species in the hunt for their valuable oil.

This afternoon, you will hike the island to forage for supper under the baking sun, mindful that fresh water here is scarce. Tonight, you will return home by boat to St. Augustine and civilization after a long thirty days on watch. For now, you guard La Florida and your family to the north from the fortified watchtower on this fragile, isolated island—preserved and protected today as Fort Matanzas National Monument.



Osprey

Brown pelicans

Bald eagles

Salt marsh

Hammock

Dunes

Northern gannets

Right whale

Brown pelicans

Atlantic Ocean

Matanzas River

Palmetto

Indigo snake

Railroad vine

Roseate spoonbills

Prickly pear cactus

Gopher tortoise

Least terns

Black skimmers

Great blue heron

Northern harrier

Sea oats

Marsh rabbit

Green turtle

Fort Matanzas

Double-crested cormorant

Wood stork

Great egret

Snowy egret

Red rat snake

Raccoon

Bobcat

Diamondback rattlesnake

Willetts

Portuguese man-of-war

Atlantic oysters

Spotted eagle ray

Red drum

Common octopus

Atlantic surf clams

Blacktip shark

Southern flounder

Bottlenose dolphins

Atlantic needlefish

Laughing gull

Ruddy turnstones

Anastasia Island beach mouse

Quartz sand

Coquina sand

Sanderlings

Matanzas Inlet

Ghost crabs

Sea purslane

Loggerhead turtle

Leatherback turtle

Mullet

Moon jellyfish

Laughing gulls

Tarpon

Bonnethead shark

Pompano

Cannonball jellyfish

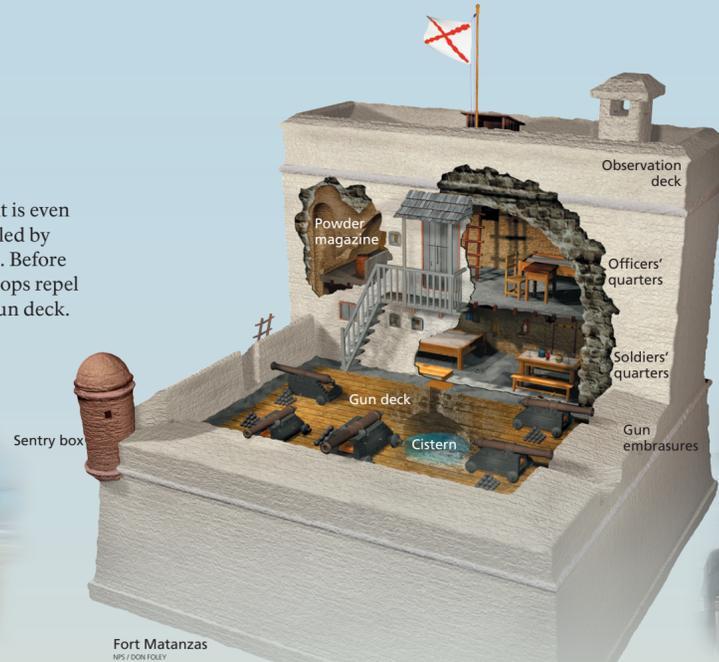
# Fort Matanzas

The main threat to St. Augustine is from the north by sea. The city is also vulnerable from the south by river. Beginning in 1569, Spain's military builds a series of wooden watchtowers along the Matanzas River, approaching St. Augustine. Wind, water, and heat repeatedly wear down the towers. In 1740 the Spanish replace the southernmost tower with a masonry fort.

Fort Matanzas proves its worth before it is even completed. In 1742 twelve British ships led by Gov. James Oglethorpe appear offshore. Before they can enter the inlet, the Spanish troops repel them with cannon fire from the fort's gun deck.



NPS / STEVEN N. PATRICIA



Fort Matanzas  
NPS / DON FOLEY



Spanish officer, 1700s  
NPS / RICHARD SCHLECHT



Fort Matanzas, 1912  
HENRY HIRD / VISIT ST. AUGUSTINE



Fort Matanzas, 2018  
NPS

The site...was the most advantageous and proper to keep under cover the entrance into the bay through this point.

Lt. Ramón de la Cruz, 1820

**Before European Settlement** Timucua people occupy most of northern Florida for several hundred years. They grow crops, hunt for food, and trade with other tribes and newcomers from Spain—until relations deteriorate.

Left: Timucuan stone projectile point  
Right: Fishbone hair pin or needle  
CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE



**1564** The French establish Fort Caroline. Built with the help of the local Timucua, it is one of the first attempts by Europeans to start a colony in the New World. France's presence disrupts Spain's ambitions to dominate New World trade and culture; years of conflict ensue.

**1569** The Spanish build an unarmed wooden watchtower, thatched hut, and stockade at Matanzas Inlet (above). The structures fall victim to the elements and must be replaced often.

**1740** When Great Britain lays siege to St. Augustine, Spain starts building a solid coquina (shellstone) fortification at Matanzas Inlet. Unable to carry large cannon through these shallow waters, a ship would be outgunned by the fort's artillery.

**1742** Two British longboats enter Matanzas Inlet (above) in September. Assuming the new fort is not ready for combat, the British are surprised by cannon fire from the gun deck. They return in April 1743, but rough seas turn them back; they make no other attempts to attack the fort.

**1853** After years of neglect, the fort has deteriorated. Ceilings and walls are cracked, the river has undermined the foundation's southeast corner, and vegetation overruns the exterior. Restoration begins in 1916 to preserve the fort for its historic value.

**1924** On October 15 President Calvin Coolidge designates Fort Matanzas a national monument. Originally under the War Department, ownership transfers to the National Park Service on August 10, 1933.

**1972** The National Park Service begins free ferry service to the fort. More repairs stabilize and restore the fort, and rooms are historically furnished.

**1999** Historic fort chimney reconstructed.

**1588** British defeat Spanish Armada  
**1607** English settle Jamestown

**1619** First enslaved Africans brought to Virginia

**1775-83** American Revolution

**1861-65** US Civil War

**1914-18** World War I  
**1929** Great Depression

**1939-45** World War II

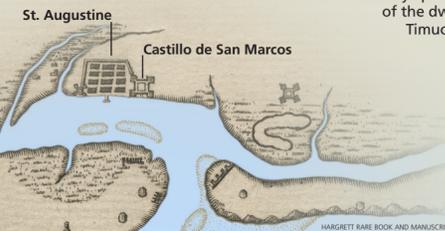
**1964** Civil Rights Act



**1513** After Juan Ponce de León's exploration, Spain claims Florida. Power struggles among Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain play out in the New World over the next few centuries.

**1565** To stop French expansion in the area, Spain establishes St. Augustine. In September a French fleet from Fort Caroline sent to attack the town is hit by a storm and wrecks far to the south of St. Augustine. The site where Spanish soldiers kill the French shipwreck survivors is called Matanzas—the Spanish word for slaughter.

**1672-95** Spain builds Castillo de San Marcos to protect St. Augustine (map below).



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**1763** Spain cedes Florida to Great Britain as a result of the Seven Years' War (1756-63). Many Spanish colonists and most of the dwindling population of Timucuas evacuate to Cuba.

**1783** Defeated in the American Revolution, Great Britain returns Florida to US ally Spain. As pressure for colonial independence grows, conflicts in Florida plague Spain.

**1821** Spain cedes Florida to the United States on March 3. Florida becomes the 27th US state on March 3, 1845.

## Visit the Park

Fort Matanzas National Monument is 14 miles south of St. Augustine via FL A1A. The park is open 9 am to 5:30 pm daily; closed Thanksgiving and December 25. Admission is free.

The visitor center has information, a film, a sales area, and exhibits on natural and historic features.

Visit the fort only by ranger-led tour. A passenger ferry runs hourly on the half-hour from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm, weather permitting. Get a boarding pass (free) at the visitor center.

Swim Safely Rip currents are dangerous! Swim with caution. There are no lifeguards on duty at the park. It is recommended you swim only at guarded beaches. Park (free) at beachside and riverside lots; closed daily at 10 pm. Overnight parking is prohibited.

Enjoy a Safe Visit The climate is hot and humid. Drink plenty of water. Watch for overexertion. Wear sunscreen, cool clothing, sunglasses, and a hat. Watch the weather. Seek shelter during storms. Do not climb or sit on fort walls, rocks, or cannon. Do not walk on oyster shells.

### EMERGENCIES CALL 911

Regulations Alcohol and metal detectors are prohibited. Glass containers are prohibited on the beach. Docking private vessels at the fort and letting off passengers are prohibited. Pets must be leashed. Clean up after your pet. Federal law prohibits firearms in many areas; refer to signs posted at entrances. For more information contact a ranger. A complete list of regulations is on the park website.

Accessibility We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For more information go to the visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check our website. The ferry and Coastal Hammock Trail are wheelchair-accessible; the fort is not.

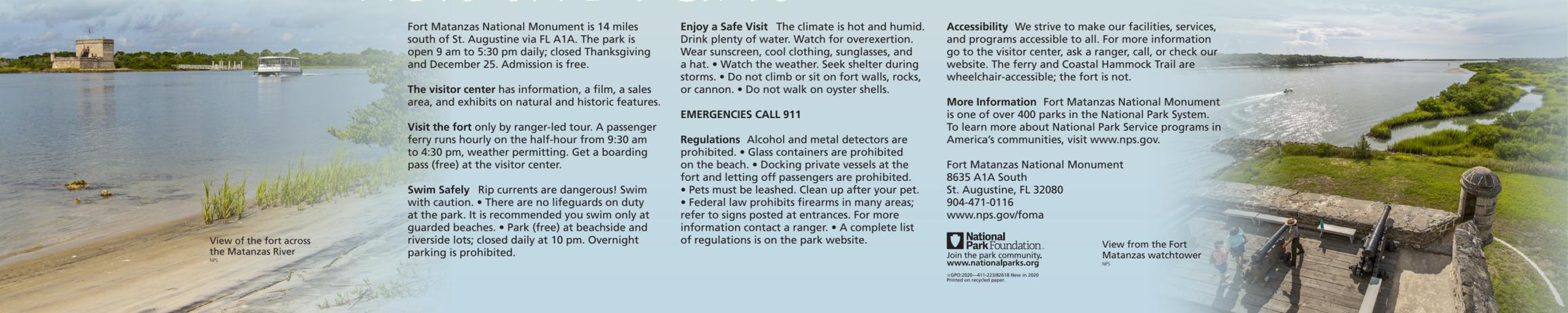
More Information Fort Matanzas National Monument is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about National Park Service programs in America's communities, visit [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov).

Fort Matanzas National Monument  
8635 A1A South  
St. Augustine, FL 32080  
904-471-0116  
[www.nps.gov/foma](http://www.nps.gov/foma)

National Park Foundation  
Join the park community.  
[www.nationalparks.org](http://www.nationalparks.org)

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View from the Fort Matanzas watchtower  
NPS



View of the fort across the Matanzas River  
NPS



0 0.25 0.5 Kilometer  
0 0.25 0.5 Mile

- Park area open to public
- Park area closed to public
- Boardwalk
- Parking lot

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