

The Island Breeze

Gulf Islands National Seashore
Park Newspaper - 2022 Edition



Welcome to Gulf Islands National Seashore!



It is my honor and privilege to represent Gulf Islands National Seashore as the new superintendent.

My vision for the park is simple. I want Gulf Islands National Seashore to be a park where staff are proud to work, the community is proud to have as a neighbor and partner, and most important, people enjoy visiting.

As the nation's largest seashore, this national park has something for everyone- forts with cannons, white beaches, winding bayous,

wildlife habitats, boardwalk trails, and my favorite activity, camping under the stars with my family.

With all there is to see and do on land, visitors are often surprised to find that a majority of the park - over 80 percent - consist of water extending a mile into the Gulf of Mexico and into the quieter waters of the Santa Rosa and Mississippi sounds.

With such a big area to support, we rely on our partners. Passengers ferries like the Pensacola Bay City Ferry in Florida, and Ship Island Excursions in Mississippi, provide visitors transportation while sharing the water with pods of dolphins and diving pelicans. Concessionaires like Eastern National ensure you have souvenirs and cancellation stamps readily available.

I hope you enjoy your visit to our seashore and take advantage of all that it has to offer. Relax, enjoy, explore!

Darrel Echols,
Superintendent

GULF ISLANDS BY THE Numbers

JANUARY 8, 1971

Gulf Islands was designated a National Seashore by Congress in 1971. In 2021, it was listed as the ninth most visited national park.



5+ million visitors

LARGEST NATIONAL SEASHORE

Gulf Islands is 139,175 total acres, making it the largest out of the nation's ten seashores.



Dive Deeper

82% of Gulf Islands National Seashore is underwater!



Overnight Stays

Over 100,000 RV and tent campers stay at Gulf Islands every year!

160 miles of pristine coastline

Gulf Islands stretches 160 miles from Cat Island, Mississippi to Okaloosa, Florida.



A BIRDER'S HAVEN

- 3 sites on the Great Florida Birding Trail
- 5 protected species
- Over 300 species total



SANCTUARY FOR SEA TURTLES

Five species of the six sea turtle species found in Florida have been spotted in Gulf Islands.



Volunteers In Parks

Current volunteer opportunities can be viewed at:

www.nps.gov/guis/getinvolved/volunteer.htm

EXAMPLES

- Customer Service Desk
- Living History Programs
- Campground Site Hosts
- Traffic Control
- Maintenance
- Photography
- Historic Preservation
- Beach Cleanup
- Marine Turtle Patrol



To learn about additional opportunities, group opportunities, or general questions, email guis_information@nps.gov

Contact Us

Phone:

General Inquiries: 850-934-2600
Mississippi Visitor Center : 228-230-4100
Campground Office: 850-934-2622

Email:

guis_information@nps.gov

Mail

Gulf Islands National Seashore
1801 Gulf Breeze Parkway
Gulf Breeze, FL 32563



Facebook:
[@GulfIslandsNPS](https://www.facebook.com/GulfIslandsNPS)



Twitter:
[@GulfIslandsNPS](https://twitter.com/GulfIslandsNPS)

On The Web



Instagram:
[@GulfIslandsNPS](https://www.instagram.com/GulfIslandsNPS)



Website:
www.nps.gov/guis

Superintendent's Corner

Cruisin' the Bay

The lyrics of beach balladeer Jimmy Buffett capture the fun, joy, and relaxation of being on the water in a boat. Landlubbers and would be boat owners can now join in by catching a ride aboard a beautiful 200 passenger, double decker, ferry boat that plies park waters of the Mississippi Sound between Biloxi, Gulfport and the Ship Island during the spring, summer and fall.

Named Capt. Pete, these ferries are operated by park concessioner Ship Island Excursions. Peter Martin Skrmetta, "Captain Pete, a Croatian immigrant and Biloxi, Mississippi entrepreneur, established "Pan Isles, Inc." in 1926. Today the company is known as Ship Island Excursions and is owned and operated by the son of the founder, Peter Mathew Skrmetta and his four sons.

Ship Island is only accessible by boat. The trip takes about one hour each way to travel 12 miles. Passengers can ride within the air conditioned main deck cabin with access to snack bar, video screen, and restrooms, or enjoy the sea breezes and vistas commanding a 360 degree view from the shaded upper observation deck. Sit in the front of the bow and enjoy a free shower.

The leisurely boat ride is part of the Gulf Islands National Seashore experience you don't want to miss. Each leg of the route passes through national seashore waters. During summer months, park rangers are aboard to point out dolphins, pelicans, and other wildlife, and bring the 400 year maritime history of the Mississippi barrier islands to life.

Tickets are more than your pass of transport – they grant all-day access to an island oasis. Ship Island is booming with opportunities including self-guided tours of historic Fort Massachusetts, ranger programs, wilderness trails, beach combing, and an exclusive swim beach.

The two hour circuit across the sound is a great way to embrace the salt air and gain your sea legs, and connects the abundant activities and experiences of the Mississippi Gulf Coast and Gulf Islands National Seashore. Don't forget the necessities, because once you arrive on the island, you are there until the ferry departs. Buy your tickets in advance at www.msshipisland.com because you don't want to miss an opportunity to visit the Ship Island!



Underground Railroad Network to Freedom

Established in 1998, the Network to Freedom is a federal program that commemorates the stories of the men and women who risked everything for freedom and those who helped them. It honors, preserves, and promotes the history of resistance to enslavement through escape and flight worldwide. It helps weave local historical places, museums, and interpretive programs related to the Underground Railroad into a community of national stories.

The Gulf Coast preserves emotional, powerful, and complex Underground Railroad stories. At Gulf Islands National Seashore, four sites listed on the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program. These sites include Pensacola Pass, Fort Pickens, Santa Rosa Area, and the Fort Barrancas Area.

In the mid-1800s, freedom seekers, or enslaved people who took action to obtain freedom from slavery, hid aboard ships large and small hoping to sail to freedom. In 1850, a ship carrying lumber sailed out Pensacola Pass on its journey to Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Hidden aboard the ship was an enslaved man named Adam. Adam made it to Portsmouth and met allies who helped him ashore and onward to Canada, where slavery no longer existed.

Eleven years later, on the eve of the Civil War, Fort Pickens became a destination for freedom seekers. Eight enslaved people approached United States soldiers at Fort Pickens in March 1861. The commanding officer, however, returned these freedom seekers—the first to voluntarily enter U.S. military lines in what became the Civil War—to slavery. More freedom seekers soon made their way to the island fortress, arriving individually and in pairs. One enslaved couple named Peter Dyson and Henrietta sailed to their freedom together using a small boat. They reached Fort Pickens in the summer of 1861 and by that fall arrived in New York City.

The Fort Barrancas Area became a destination for freedom seekers in 1863. Known as Barrancas during the Civil War, the U.S. Army post served as a base for white and Black soldiers operating in West Florida and South Alabama. In November 1863, Henry Stalbert fled his enslaver's Alabama plantation. Weeks later he reached Barrancas, upon reaching the Army post, Henry joined the United States Colored Troops and played an important role in the fight for freedom and the ongoing struggle over racial equality.

Today these powerful and emotional stories are preserved at Fort Pickens and Fort Barrancas Area. Visit today to learn about the fight for Black freedom and racial equality.



Aerial Image of Fort Pickens in Florida.

Things to Do



Bird Watching

More than 345 species of birds have been identified within Gulf Islands, including several species of shorebirds such as the snowy plover and least tern that use the shoreline for nesting.

The Perdido Key, Naval Live Oaks, and Fort Pickens areas are listed as sites on the Great Florida Birding Trail. Keep your eyes open, binoculars ready, and happy birding!



The blue waters of the Gulf of Mexico offer many recreational opportunities.



Fishing

Piers in the Davis Bayou and Fort Pickens areas provide opportunities to fish. Whether you're on land or in the water, you'll see visitors casting a line for fish like pompano, sheepshead, and redfish.

State fishing licenses are required to fish in the park from land and in the water for fresh and saltwater fishing. The only exception is the Fort Pickens Fishing Pier. Check the park website for other rules.



Bicycling

Many visitors enjoy biking along the winding and scenic Highway 399 which stretches over 7 miles along Santa Rosa Island. This road experiences heavy automobile traffic. Cyclists should use caution and always wear a helmet.

For those who prefer to ride on a trail, the first 2 miles of the Florida National Scenic Trail within Fort Pickens feature hard packed sand and earth. Cyclists should be aware of other bikes, dogs, and hikers that may be on this heavily trafficked trail.



Boating

Boating can be a great way to experience the emerald waters of the Gulf of Mexico and the many sounds, bayous, and bays in the area.

Paved boat launches are available in the Davis Bayou and Okaloosa areas. Boat-in backcountry camping is available on the barrier islands in Mississippi, as well as the eastern end of Perdido Key.

Check weather and sea reports before heading out on the water and remember no dogs are allowed on the beach or in the water.



Gulf Islands National Seashore protects crucial habitats for nesting shorebirds.



Hiking

Within each area of the national seashore there are a variety of hiking trails to explore, including boardwalks and nature trails. Visitors may view wildlife, explore historical structures, or make their way down to the water. Backpackers can start the Florida National Scenic Trail at Fort Pickens. Discover other trails in the park by downloading the National Park Service (NPS) mobile app.



Junior Ranger Program

Free junior ranger books are available for youth ages 6 to 11 from the visitor centers at Fort Pickens, Fort Barrancas, and Davis Bayou.

Complete activities to earn a badge. Badges can be retrieved from any of the visitor centers, or from the bookstore within Fort Pickens.

These collectible badges are unique to all 400+ national park sites! Check out National Park Service website for more fun activities to do while in the park.



Hiking the Florida National Scenic Trail



The Florida National Scenic Trail is one of 11 scenic trails in the country and is managed by the U.S. Forest Service.

The Northern Terminus is located in the Fort Pickens Area of Gulf Islands, and can be followed approximately 1400 miles to the Southern Terminus at Big Cypress National Preserve in South Florida.

The first 7 miles of trail begins adjacent to the fort and winds through coastal pines, past batteries, and through the campground before crossing the road onto Langdon Beach. It exits the park and reenters in the Santa Rosa area, where the trail continues along the beach for another 7 miles.

If you get lost, look for the famous "orange blaze" to guide your way. For more information visit www.fs.usda.gov/fnst



The Florida Trail marker for the Northern Terminus in Gulf Islands National Seashore.



Enjoying the Park with Your Pet

There are many trails for visitors to enjoy with their pets in the park. Though dogs are not allowed on the beach or in the forts, there are miles of trails within Naval Live Oaks and Davis Bayou areas that are perfect for a walk with your furry friend.

Ask a ranger how to earn a B.A.R.K. Ranger badge for your pet's collar!

- Bag your pet's waste**
- Always leash your pet**
- Respect Wildlife**
- Know where you can go**

Things to Do



Paddling

Gulf Islands Perdido Key Blueway is part of the 1,500 mile Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail. The gently sloping shore and shallow near-shore waters of Naval Live Oaks Area and Santa Rosa Island make for a relaxing paddle. Or, experience solitude on the still waters of Davis Bayou Blueway, surrounded by tall grasses and wildlife.

Small watercraft launches are present in the Davis Bayou, Perdido Key, Naval Live Oaks and Okaloosa areas. All paddlers and guests on board are required by law to wear a life vest.



Picnicking

There are many ADA compliant picnic areas and pavilions throughout the national seashore. Popular locations include Battery Worth, Langdon Beach, Opal Beach, Davis Bayou and Naval Live Oaks.

Some pavilions are able to be reserved in advance for a fee. See page 12 for more information.



The Milky Way shines above Santa Rosa Island.



Scenic Views

Gulf Islands has many vantage points from which to view the sunrise, sunset, and stars. Popular locations include Opal Beach, the tops of Batteries Langdon and Worth, Fort Pickens, and the Davis Bayou boardwalk. Check the weather forecast for clear skies and a new moon for the best views.



Swimming

Swim beaches are located on the Gulf and bay sides of the Santa Rosa, Fort Pickens, and Perdido Key areas in Florida and on Ship Island in Mississippi.

Lifeguards are present during summer months at Opal Beach, Langdon Beach, and Johnson Beach. Rip current flags are at each entrance station. Water safety tips are located at each beach access point.



Snorkeling & Diving

In the Florida section of the park, there are a handful of locations where visitors can explore the underwater world to experience the park for a new perspective.

The jetties off of Fort Pickens and beaches of Santa Rosa Island provide opportunities to see marine wildlife. Sunken vehicles like the *Catharine* may be exposed for divers who carefully plan with the tides and weather forecast. Most locations are relatively shallow, ranging from 15 to 30 feet deep.

Always dive within the limits of your certification level, and never dive without a buddy. Divers should be extremely cautious of boat traffic and strong currents within the Gulf.



Visitor Centers

Gulf Islands currently staffs visitor centers at Fort Pickens, Fort Barrancas, and Davis Bayou areas. These buildings have restrooms nearby, informative exhibits, and rangers to answer questions you may have about the park.

Gulf Islands National Seashore cancellations, also known as passport stamps, can also be obtained at these locations, as well as the Fort Pickens Bookstore and Fort Massachusetts.

Visitors wishing to purchase park merchandise or souvenirs should visit the bookstore located within the historic Fort Pickens.

Interpretive programs delivered by park staff are available year round in both Florida and Mississippi.

Visit the park's calendar on the website, NPS mobile app or Facebook page for the most current information.



A park ranger provides a program at historic Fort Pickens stop 14 on the self guided tour.

Ask a Ranger



What is the purpose of the national seashore?

The nation's largest national seashore, Gulf Islands preserves and protects important resources like habitats and historic structures for future visitor use.

How can visitors help protect the seashore?

Gulf Islands protects the home of many resources to include, structures, habitats and wildlife.

Visitors can help protect the seashore by staying on natural trails and out of animal habitats, respecting park facilities and historic structures by not climbing on cannons and walls, and taking home the items you brought with you, like trash and beach accessories.



A biologist installs a temporary shorebird habitat closure sign in the park. This sign advises visitors to stay out of specific areas so shorebirds can safely nest without being disturbed.

What were the forts used for?

Most forts in the park were built as part of the Third System of Coastal Forts to protect the nation from foreign invasion in the mid 1800's. Fort Massachusetts in Mississippi was built to protect commerce lanes.

How is Gulf Islands National Seashore impacted by the climate?

The park consists of seven islands constantly on the move. These islands are vulnerable to flooding and erosion from sea level rise as a result of climate change.



Miles Between	Fort Pickens Area	Fort Barrancas Area	Santa Rosa Day Use Area	Okaloosa Day Use Area	Perdido Key Area	Naval Live Oaks Area	Davis Bayou Area	Ship Island Ferry
Fort Pickens Area	0	33	15	45	34	13	130	150
Fort Barrancas Area	33	0	22	56	11	16	115	139
Santa Rosa Day Use Area	15	22	0	31	30	9	125	145
Okaloosa Day Use Area	45	56	31	0	59	34	156	176
Perdido Key Area	34	11	30	59	0	25	117	137
Naval Live Oaks Area	13	16	9	34	25	0	121	139
Davis Bayou Area	130	115	125	156	117	121	0	20
Ship Island Ferry	150	139	145	176	137	139	20	0
Mississippi Islands	Visit page five for information on how to visit Mississippi's barrier islands.							

nal Seashore Map



Pensacola Bay Areas



Pensacola Bay City Ferry operates a seasonal tour boat service between downtown Pensacola, Pensacola Beach, and Fort Pickens. For information about the service and availability for travel to Fort Pickens, please visit www.PensacolaBayCityFerry.com

Downtown Tour Boat Terminal *Commendancia Pier*

Located at the south end of Commendancia Street which is south of Main Street and east of Palafox Street.

Pensacola Beach Tour Boat Terminal *Quietwater Pier*

Located to the north of the intersection of Fort Pickens Road and Via De Luna within the Quietwater Beach Boardwalk complex.

Fort Pickens Tour Boat Terminal *Fort Pickens Bay Side*

Located north of the historic fort within the Fort Pickens Ferry Plaza complex.

Fort Barrancas Area



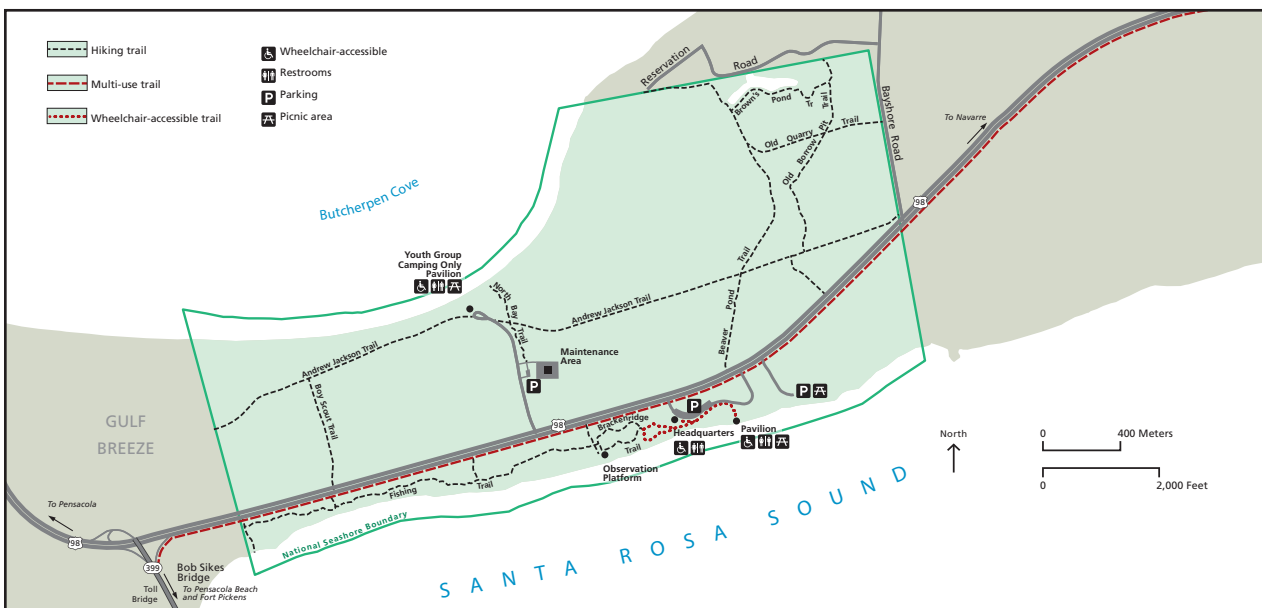
The Fort Barrancas Area is located on Naval Air Station Pensacola. It is home to two historic forts, Fort Barrancas and Advanced Redoubt, built during the mid-1800s, as well as a Spanish battery built during the late 1700s.

Start your visit at the area's visitor center to get your passport stamped and then take a self-guiding tour of the forts. There are also two trails if you'd like to take a short walk. Watch your step as you walk through the area, as many surfaces are uneven and sandy. There is an entrance fee for the Fort Barrancas Area. Camping and overnight parking is not permitted in this area of the park. Day use area only.

Directions: From I-10 take Exit 7A onto Pine Forest Road. Turn right onto Blue Angel Parkway and continue for 13 miles. After entering the gate, continue on Blue Angel Parkway toward the National Naval Aviation Museum. Just past the museum entrance turn left onto Taylor Road. The entrance to Fort Barrancas is on your right off Taylor Road.

Know Before You Go: Visitors must have a military ID to access. Check the Naval Air Station Pensacola website prior to visiting for entrance instructions. Hours vary for the forts and visitor centers. Check the park website for hours.

Naval Live Oaks Area



The Naval Live Oaks Area preserves the only federal live oak plantation and first experimental tree farm in the nation. This area is great for picnicking, fishing, hiking, launching a kayak, and more. Park headquarters is also located here. There is no visitor center.

Camping and overnight parking is not permitted in this area of the park is day use area only.

Directions: Head towards Pensacola Beach on U.S. Hwy. 98/Pensacola Bay Bridge. After reaching Gulf Breeze, stay on U.S. Hwy. 98 for 4.1 miles.

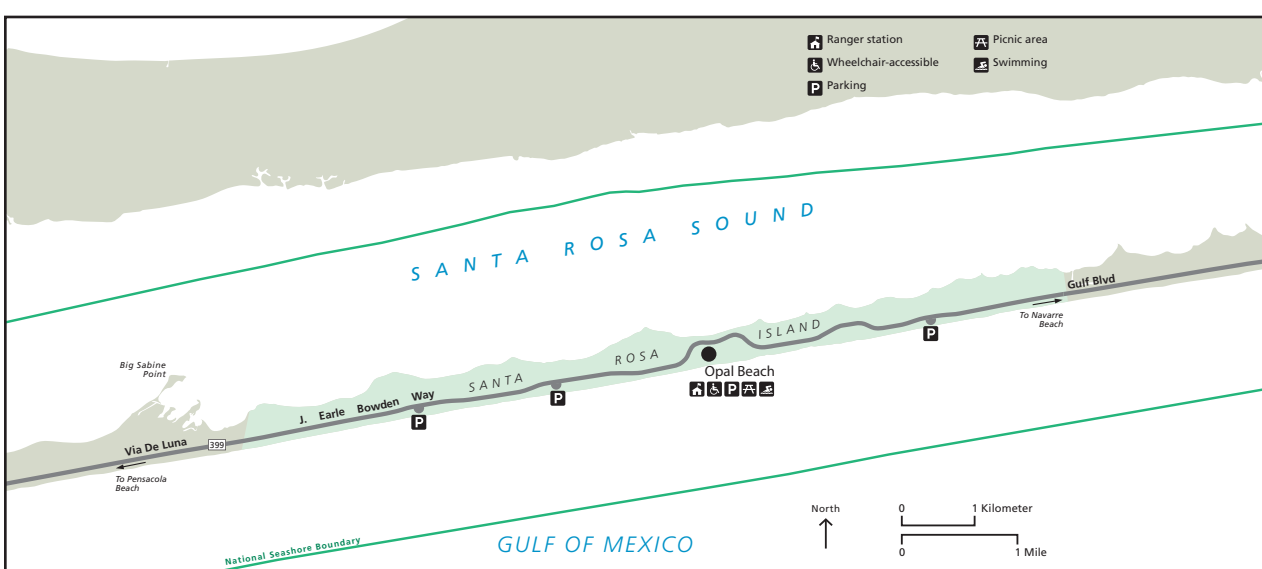
Okaloosa Area

The Okaloosa Area features an excellent opportunity for swimming in the calm waters of Choctawhatchee Bay. There are restrooms and a boat launch here. Picnicking and swimming are the major highlights of this area. Be sure to check weather and surf conditions before visiting. Visitors to this area must have a park pass or pay the entrance fee virtually upon entrance. Camping and overnight parking are not permitted in this area of the park is a day use area only.

Okaloosa Area

From downtown Pensacola, Florida follow U.S. 98 across the Pensacola Bay Bridge. After reaching Gulf Breeze, stay on U.S. 98 for 38.1 miles. The Okaloosa Area is just east of Fort Walton Beach, Florida.

Santa Rosa Area

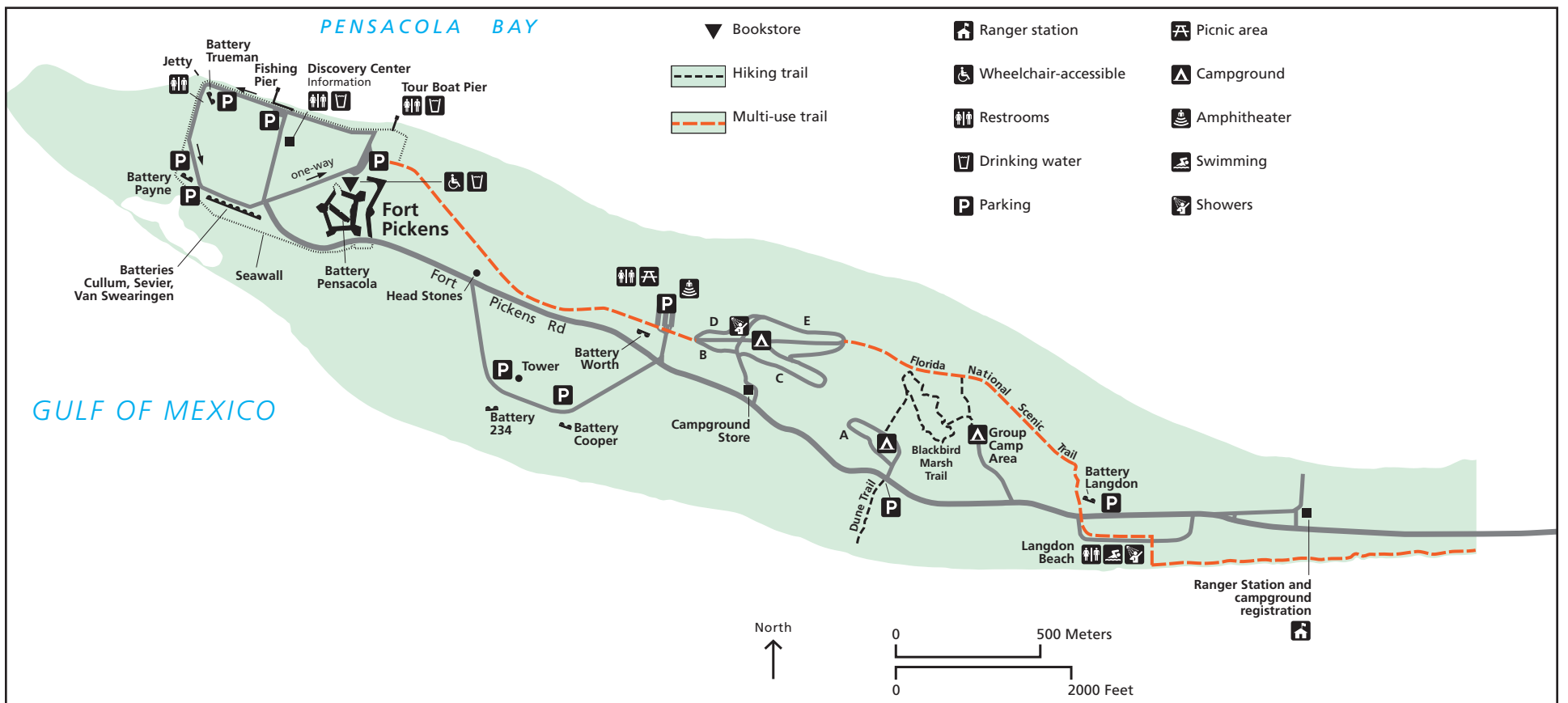


This seven mile strip of Santa Rosa Area features one of the most beautiful scenic drives along the Gulf of Mexico and some excellent beach access points. There are picnic pavilions and restrooms at the Opal Beach Complex.

Beach combing, fishing, and swimming are the major highlights of this area. Be sure to check weather and surf conditions before visiting. Visitors to Opal Beach must have a park pass or pay the entrance fee. Camping and overnight parking is not permitted in this area of the park is a day use area only.

Directions: From Interstate 10, take Exit 12 for I-110 South, exit 1B Gregory Street East, merge onto 30 E Chase Street, turn left onto Bayfront Parkway /Hwy 98 East, merge onto Hwy 399 to beaches, cross toll bridge (\$1.00), continue as the road curves to the left through Pensacola Beach.

Fort Pickens Area



The Fort Pickens Area is located on the western end of Santa Rosa Island and preserves hundreds of years of human history. The Fort Pickens Visitor's Center offers fun, interactive exhibits for all ages about the history of the site as well as its natural wonders. Take a hike on one of the many trails through the area, including the Florida National Scenic Trail.

There's a bookstore open year round at historic Fort Pickens. Visit the incredible white-sand beaches and enjoy the blue-green waters of the Gulf of Mexico at one of the many beach access points. The Fort Pickens Campground is ideal for those looking to spend an extended vacation at the park.

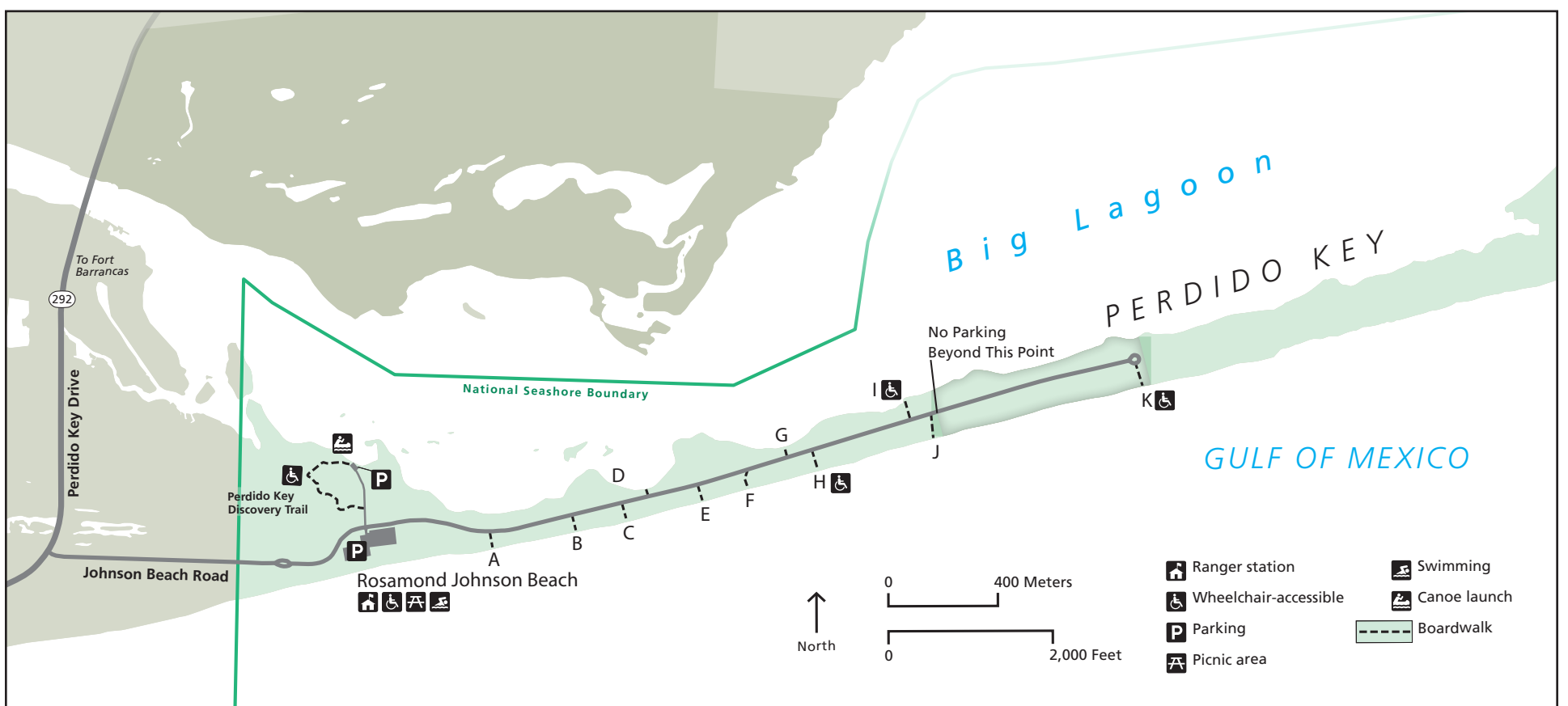
Visitors can explore the historic fortifications with a ranger or with one of the self-guiding tours on the National Parks Service app. Watch your step as you walk through the area, many surfaces are uneven and sandy. There is an entrance fee for the Fort Pickens Area.

Directions: From I-10 East or West take Exit 12 toward Pensacola Beach. Continue on I-110 South for 5.5 miles and follow signs to Gulf Breeze/Gregory Street East. Continue onto US Hwy 98/Pensacola Bay Bridge for 4.6 miles. Use the right two lanes to turn right onto Pensacola Beach Road. After the toll booth, turn right at the light onto Fort Pickens Road. Continue straight for 3.5 miles.

Fort Pickens Discovery Center (Visitor Center) and Bookstore Passport Stamp Locations

Hours: 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Perdido Key Area



The Perdido Key Area is often called the hidden gem of Northwest Florida. In addition to spectacular beach access points, this area has several picnic pavilions, a boardwalk trail, a small boat launch and a swim beach known as Johnson Beach. Be sure to check weather and surf conditions before visiting. Limited parking fills up fast March through September. Camping and overnight parking is not permitted in this area of the park is a day use area only.

Directions: Perdido Key Area is off Florida Route 292, southwest from Pensacola; turn east on Johnson Beach Road. When heading south on 292, just after going over the bridge, turn left onto Johnson Beach Road, where road curves to the right. When heading north on Florida Route 292, take a right turn onto Johnson Beach Road, as the road curves to the left, before you reach the bridge.

Developed Campgrounds

All campgrounds reservations must be made on www.recreation.gov or by calling 1-877-444-6777. Reservations cannot be made on-site.

Fort Pickens Campground



Located on a barrier island between the Gulf of Mexico and Pensacola Bay, this large campground is open for reservations year-round. It contains nearly 200 sites with easy access to white sandy beaches, trails, and historic structures.

Prices: Electric site \$40; Non-electric site \$26

America the Beautiful Senior and Access pass holders get 50 percent off campsite fees

Basic Details:

- Camping fees do not include entrance fees.
- Amenities include flush toilets, showers, drinking water and a dump station.
- Loops A, C, and E permit two tents or one tent and one RV (motor home/pop-up/trailer). Individual water and power hook-ups are available.
- Only soft-sided, ground tents are permitted in Loop B.
- Tents, vans, and small RVs are permitted in Loop D.
- All sites allow a maximum of eight occupants.
- Campground office is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Check-out is 11 a.m. Check in after 2 p.m.
- The Fort Pickens Area is closed to traffic for quiet hours between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m.

Davis Bayou Campground



Located east of downtown Ocean Springs, Mississippi, this campground is open year-round. The campground features 52 sites nestled among live oaks and adjacent to a saltwater marsh. It provides easy access to boating, fishing, biking, and hiking trails.

Basic Details:

- All sites permit two tents or one tent and one RV (motor home/fifth-wheel/trailer).
- All sites allow a maximum of eight occupants.
- Amenities include flush toilets, showers, drinking water and a dump station.
- Each site features individual water and power hook-ups.
- Generators are not permitted at any time in the campground.
- Campground office is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Check-out is 11 a.m. Check-in is after 2 p.m.
- Campgrounds are closed to traffic and for quiet hours between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m.

Backcountry Camping

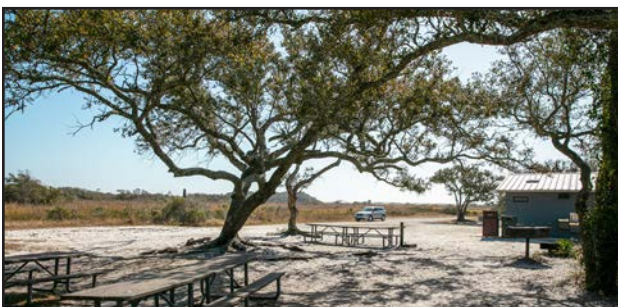


By Taylor McElroy

Boat-in backcountry camping is available in Florida at the eastern end of Perdido Key, and in Mississippi at Petit Bois, West Petit Bois, Horn, and the National Park Service portion of Cat Island. Currently hike in camping is suspended at Perdido Key.

All campers must review and comply with the primitive camping regulations posted on the park's website at www.nps.gov/guis/planyourvisit/backcountrycamping.htm.

Group Camping



Davis Bayou in Mississippi and the Fort Pickens Area and Naval Live Oaks Area in Florida, offer group campsites.

The Davis Bayou and Fort Pickens group campgrounds are for tents only and can accommodate up to 40 people. The Naval Live Oaks Area is available for reservation throughout the year for organized youth groups comprised primarily of young people under the age of 18.

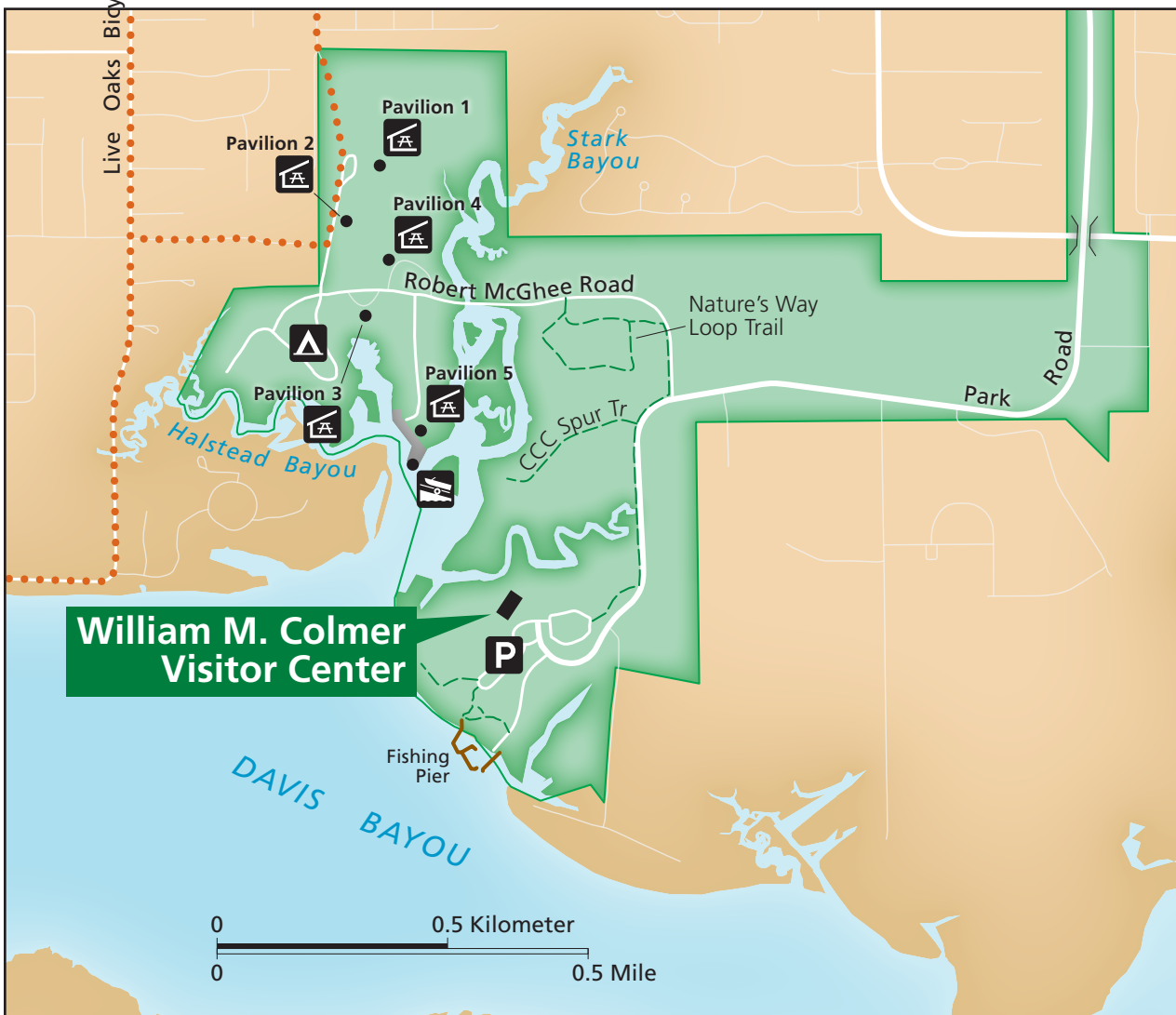
The Davis Bayou and Fort Pickens campgrounds can be reserved on recreation.gov, and the Naval Live Oaks group camping area can be reserved by emailing guis_special_use_permits@nps.gov.

Parking Instructions for the Seashore



- Review RV camper size limitations on Recreation.gov prior to reserving campsites as each campsite varies.
- Only two vehicles are allowed per site, this includes RVs, trailers, UTV's and motorcycles. Additional vehicles can be parked in designated overflow parking lots.
- All vehicles should be parked on the pavement or in approved parking spots.
- The only roadside parking in the park is between beach access points H and K in the Perdido Key Area.
- UTV/ATV vehicles to include golf carts are prohibited in the park. Exception to persons with ADA impairments which will permit use in campground only.
- Parking lot information is available on the NPS mobile app.

Davis Bayou Area



The Davis Bayou Area is the only mainland area of the national seashore in Mississippi. The area offers incredible views of the bayou and the Mississippi Sound.

The William M. Colmer Visitor Center offers many interactive exhibits about the bayou and the barrier islands for all ages.

There are several hiking trails and picnic pavilions for visitors to enjoy while in the area. There is also a boat launch perfect for fishing or launching a small boat.

Visitors can explore the bayou with a ranger on foot or by boat during the summer season. Attend one the many gator walk programs, but make sure your pet is on a leash!

Camping and overnight parking is not permitted in this area of the park is a day use area only.

**William M. Colmer Visitor Center
Passport Stamp Location**

Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**3500 Park Road
Ocean Springs, Mississippi 39564**

Directions: From I-10 East take Exit 50 toward Ocean Springs. Continue on MS-609 South for 2.8 miles. Turn left onto Bienville Blvd. The Davis Bayou Area entrance is about 2.9 miles ahead on the right.

From I-10 West take Exit 57 toward Ocean Springs. Turn right onto Ocean Springs Road, and continue for 12 miles. At the intersection continue straight onto Park Road.

Ship Island



Ship Island is located 12 miles from mainland Mississippi, and features historic Fort Massachusetts and a swim beach.

Visitor facilities include restrooms, picnic pavilions, a snack bar, beach equipment rentals, and tours of the historic fort all of which are available between mid-March and October.

A commercial ferry runs to the island during this season, depending on weather conditions. For ferry schedule and pricing, please visit www.mshipisland.com

Ship Island Excursions

1040 23rd Avenue

Gulfport, Mississippi 39501

From Ocean Springs follow Hwy. 90 to the west for 14 miles. Turn left onto 20th Avenue and then left onto Jones Park Drive.

195 Beach Boulevard (May-Aug)

Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

From Ocean Springs follow Hwy. 90 to the west for 3 miles. Parking is on the left.

Mississippi Islands

Cat, Horn, West Petit Bois, and Petit Bois islands are accessible by private boat only. Camping is allowed on these islands. All charter private boat or commercial ferry operators, organized field trips and public programs require a permit in advance. Visit the park website for more information.

Permits, Pavilions, Fees, & Passes

Special Use Permits

A special park use is a short-term activity that takes place in a park area and typically provides a benefit to an individual, group or organization, rather than the general public.

Special use permit activities include, but are not limited to:

- Weddings
- Sporting events, races, and festivals
- Public assemblies
- Commercial filming and photography
- Research and collection activities
- Scattering cremated remains
- Educational Programs and Field Trips

Commercial activities may also require a permit through commercial use authorizations. These activities include, but are not limited to:

- Boat charters
- Food concessionaires
- Towing/Transportation service
- Organized recreational programs
- Overnight camping on barrier islands

A primary review of the requested permit is required and focuses on any anticipated damage to natural and cultural resources, and disruption of normal visitor use. A fee is generally required for a Special Park Use or Commercial Use Authorization permit.

For more information email guis_special_use_permits@nps.gov

Entrance Fee (Valid for 1-7 Days)	
Private Vehicle	\$25
Motorcycle	\$20
Pedestrians & Bicyclists	\$15
Annual Passes	
Gulf Islands Annual Pass	\$45
Interagency Annual Pass	\$80
Interagency Senior Pass	\$20
Interagency Military Pass	Free
Lifetime Passes	
Interagency Senior Lifetime Pass	\$80
Interagency Access Pass	Free

Entrance fees are charged for most of the Florida areas of the national seashore. Visitors can purchase a digital park pass prior to arrival at www.recreation.gov.

Passes can also be purchased at the park's entrance stations. Entrance stations only accept credit cards. The \$25 entrance fee is currently waived for all passengers taking the Pensacola Bay City Ferry.

Passes are good for seven days. For more frequent visitors, the national seashore offers an annual pass that provides 12-months of unlimited access into all park areas and an interagency pass that provides access to all national parks.



Download the National Park Service mobile app!

View self-guided tours, interactive maps, trail and campground locations, amenities, things to do, and more!



Pavilion Reservations

Several pavilions throughout the national seashore may be reserved in advance by the public. Seven sites in Florida and four in the Davis Bayou Area in Mississippi can be reserved. Visit the website for a list of locations.

To reserve a pavilions email guis_special_use_permits@nps.gov

Safety Reminders & Important Park Regulations

For Your Safety:



The sun can be intense. Wear sunblock.



Be mindful of uneven surfaces.



Closed areas protect you and wildlife.



In case of an emergency call 911.

Learn more and get a complete list of park regulations on the park website.

Important Park Regulations:



Glass not permitted on beaches.



Metal detectors are not permitted.



Off road driving prohibited in all areas.



Unmanned Aircraft i.e. drones are not permitted.



Pets are not permitted in the forts, in the water, or on the sound and Gulf beaches.

Shorebird Closures



When walking on the national seashore's beaches between February and September, stay alert for signs and posts marking shorebird nesting areas

These areas are closed to all visitor use, as nesting shorebirds are easily spooked leading to nest abandonment and death of young birds. If you come across a closure, be sure to keep your distance and find an alternate route around the closed area.

Many of the Florida and Mississippi threatened or endangered shorebirds rely on the seashore as a habitat. The national seashore provides nesting habitat for several species of ground nesting shorebirds including least terns, snowy plovers, Wilson's plovers, and black skimmers.