

VISITOR ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES GUIDE

to National Marine Sanctuaries and Other Opportunities for Water-Based Recreation



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Author: Elizabeth Moore

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Ocean Service, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

Layout: Dayna Rignanese

Cover photo: Adaptive sailing allows every mariner a chance to enjoy a sunny day under sail. Photo: Winds of Change

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INTRODUCTION

As America's premier ocean park network, the National Marine Sanctuary System wants to make sure every American has access to their national marine sanctuaries and the other waters of the nation. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 61 million adults in the United States have some form of disability (a number that increases every year), and only 15 percent of those people have a disability that is visually noticeable. Disabilities can prevent people from enjoying the simple pleasures of traversing a beach, casting out a fishing line, or floating in the water on a warm, sunny day. The CDC also indicates that adults living with disabilities are more likely than those without a disability to be inactive or overweight, smoke, and have high blood pressure, making providing access to healthy recreation and activities even more important.

The National Marine Sanctuary System is a network of underwater parks encompassing more than 600,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters that are protected by 13 national marine sanctuaries and Papahānaumokuākea and Rose Atoll marine national monuments. For more than 45 years, our national marine sanctuaries have worked to protect special places in America's waters, from the site of a single Civil War shipwreck to a vast expanse of ocean surrounding remote coral reefs and tiny atolls. Backed by one of the nation's strongest pieces of ocean conservation legislation, the National Marine Sanctuaries Act, national marine sanctuaries seek to preserve the extraordinary scenic beauty, biodiversity, historical connections, and economic productivity of our most precious [underwater treasures](#).

NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM



While a national marine sanctuary is as much a protected area as a national park or national wildlife refuge, ocean parks are by nature generally more difficult to access. Some national marine sanctuaries are completely offshore, such as Gray's Reef (about 19 miles off the Georgia coast) and Flower Garden Banks (about 110 miles off the Texas coast), while others are coastal,

such as Florida Keys and Monterey Bay. But even those that are coastal usually have an inshore boundary of the mean high or low tide line. So to be in a sanctuary, you must be on, in, or under the water.

This guide is provided as a resource to those of all abilities interested in accessing national marine sanctuaries or the waters near and around them. This guide provides information about:

- Resources available online from the National Marine Sanctuary System, partners, and other parties;
- Facilities and resources available at national marine sanctuary visitor centers in specific locations;
- Organizations and businesses near or in national marine sanctuary communities that support access to water and water-based recreation; and
- Access points managed by local, state, and federal government agencies, with basic descriptions, resources available, and contact information.

There may be many access points to a national marine sanctuary (for example, the many public beaches of the Florida Keys) but the guide focuses on access points with universal access, such as an accessible fishing pier, or provide a particular resource, such as a beach wheelchair, that maximize opportunities for those with a disability to get into a national marine sanctuary and enjoy the water.

Every effort has been made to provide accurate, up-to-date resource and contact information but outside of our own visitor centers and facilities, the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) and its parent organizations do not own or otherwise have responsibility for the access points, resources, businesses, or organizations contained in this document. The information included in this guide is provided as a public service. ONMS does not directly or indirectly endorse any specific business or organization by its inclusion in this guide, and ONMS assumes no responsibility for the operations or decisions of such entities nor does ONMS make any assertion of business, organization, or facility compliance with applicable accessibility standards. If you have a business or organization that provides similar services to those businesses and organizations outlined in this guide, and you would like to be included in future editions, please contact us at sanctuaries@noaa.gov.

Coastal parks can be impacted by natural events like flooding, mudslides, water quality issues, and erosion, or by operational issues such as budget shortfalls or emergencies, all of which can impact the operation, access, and amenities in a park. We strongly recommend you use the contact information provided with each resource to confirm accuracy and availability before undertaking a trip. If you notice something that is not accurate or needs to be supplemented, please contact us at sanctuaries@noaa.gov. We hope to update the guide on a regular basis to keep information up to date.

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES

The organizations and programs listed below work on a national basis or have nation-wide chapters or projects. They focus on providing access and/or recreational experiences to people of all abilities.

- The [American Canoe Association](#) leads an [adaptive paddling program](#).
- Disabled Sports USA maintains extensive resources for access to sports and recreational activities for people with disabilities, including water-based sports such as [canoeing](#), [fishing](#), [kayaking](#), [rafting](#), [sailing](#), [scuba diving](#), [surfing](#), and [water skiing](#). The organization also has a list of [companies and organizations that provide adaptive equipment](#) for water-based recreation.
- [Fishing Has No Boundaries](#) is a national nonprofit that works to provide recreational fishing opportunities for all anglers with disabilities regardless of their age, race, gender, or disability.
To contact, check the link above or:
Call: (301) 830-6450 or toll-free: (866) 251-7252
Address: Post Office Box 695, La Plata, MD 20646
- [Project Healing Waters](#) is a national veteran-focused nonprofit that facilitates access to flyfishing activities for those with disabilities. They have [local chapters and/or projects](#) in all states with sanctuaries.
To contact, check the links above or:
Call: (715) 634-3185 or toll-free: (800) 243-3462
Address: 5453 County Hwy B, P.O. Box 175, Hayward, WI 54843
- [US Rowing](#) has a page with resources for [adaptive rowing](#).
- [US Sailing](#) maintains a page with resources for [adaptive sailing](#).
- [USA Swimming](#) offers [information and resources](#) for people with disabilities interested in swimming.
- [USA Water Ski and Wake Sports](#) hosts the [Water Skiers with Disabilities Association](#) supporting access by people with disabilities to water skiing, wakeboarding, and other “wake” sports.
- The [WAVES Project](#) (Wounded American Veterans Experience Scuba Project) is a veteran-focused nonprofit that works with disabled veterans to achieve [scuba certification](#). To contact, check the links above or:
To contact, check the links above or:

Email: info@wavesproject.com
Call: (951) 308-0049
Address: PO Box 1385, Temecula, CA

Accessibility Laws, Regulations, Policies, and Guidelines

- [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#)
- [Architectural Barriers Act \(ABA\)](#)
- [ABA Accessibility Standards \(ABAAS\)](#)
- [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act \(Section 504\)](#)
- [Section 508 Accessibility Standards](#)
- [Guide to Section 508 Standards including Tutorials](#)

- Other Useful Links
 - [GSA Section 508 website](#)
 - [Disability.Gov - comprehensive information for people with disabilities](#)



Veterans enjoy a day of fishing with the Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing (PHWFF). Photo: ©Marty Laksbergs via Flickr under a Creative Commons 2.0 License

NORTHEAST AND GREAT LAKES REGION

Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary

Michigan



A diver checks out a wreck in Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Photo: Doug Kesling/NOAA

Overview

Located in northwestern Lake Huron, Thunder Bay is adjacent to one of the most treacherous stretches of water within the Great Lakes system. Unpredictable weather, murky fog banks, sudden gales, and rocky shoals earned the area the name "Shipwreck Alley." Today, the 4300-square-mile Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary protects one of America's best-preserved and nationally-significant collections of shipwrecks. Fire, ice, collisions, and storms have claimed over 200 vessels in and around Thunder Bay. To date, nearly 100 shipwrecks have been discovered within the sanctuary. Although the sheer number of shipwrecks is impressive, it is the range of vessel types located in the sanctuary that makes the collection nationally significant. From an 1844 sidewheel steamer to a modern 500-foot-long German freighter, the shipwrecks of Thunder Bay represent a microcosm of maritime commerce and travel on the Great Lakes. These vessels, preserved in time within the fresh, cold waters of Lake Huron, still have stories to tell of

Great Lakes maritime history and commerce, from the earliest explorations to westward expansion in the 1800s and modern day lake trade. Through research, education, and community involvement, the sanctuary preserves our irreplaceable underwater treasures.

General Accessibility

The sanctuary is coastal, following Michigan's Lower Peninsula Lake Huron shoreline including Presque Isle, Alpena, and Alcona counties. The access points described below lead visitors into the sanctuary.

Visitor Centers

Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center

Painted in NOAA's signature blue and white, the 9,000-square-foot center is a must-visit for maritime history enthusiasts, featuring a wealth of exhibits and artifacts highlighting the shipwrecks of Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Explore the full-size replica of a Great Lakes schooner and shipwreck inside the museum, then head outside and wander along the waterfront Maritime Heritage Trail. Admission is free and hours vary according to season so check the link above or use the contact information below.

Call: (989) 356-8805

Address: 500 W Fletcher St, Alpena, Michigan 49707

Accessibility Features:

- Accessible parking
- Accessible entry (ramp access to facility and exhibits)
- Accessible bathrooms/water fountains
- Accessible and companion seating
- Accessible exhibits and materials, includes ramps and elevator to access all exhibit areas and theater seating areas
- Special programs: Free Shipwreck Alley App available for download. App includes audio feature that reads exhibit panels aloud via automatic beacons throughout exhibits (or may be set for on demand play). Available on [iTunes](#) or [Google Play](#).

Other Resources

- The sanctuary offers a general [visitor's resources page](#).
- The sanctuary offers a [virtual dive gallery](#) online.
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources maintains a website with [accessible recreation opportunities](#).
- Michigan State Parks maintains a [list of state parks](#) where you can access the sanctuary.
- The city of Alpena maintains [several coastal parks](#) where visitors can access the sanctuary.

Organizations and Businesses

- [Alpena Shipwreck Tours](#) offers a glass bottom boat tour of the sanctuary. From their website: “Our boats are ONLY equipped to accommodate up to 28” wide, non-motorized wheelchairs. Please note that there are stairs to the upper deck; therefore, access for guests with disabilities is somewhat limited to the outdoor seating on the upper deck. The glass viewing wells are located in the lower deck, which is accessible by wheelchair. Limited seating is also available on the lower, outer deck, which is also accessible by wheelchair. Advance boarding and departures are available upon request. For inquiries and plans to best serve special needs, please email us at info@alpenashipwrecktours.com, or call 1-800-469-4696 72 hours in advance.”
- Special programs: Free: Shipwreck Alley App available for download. App includes text feature to read along with live cruise narration of shipwrecks visited on tour. Available on [iTunes](#) or [Google Play](#).

Access Points and Amenities

Blair Street Park

Blair Street Park is located at the end of Blair Street on Lake Huron. This 0.4 acre park contains 173 feet of Thunder Bay frontage and a refurbished accessible pier for fishing, a picnic area with tables and grills, concrete bike paths connecting the State Avenue bike path to the pier, and off-street parking.

Managing Agency: City of Alpena

Contact/More Information:

http://www.alpena.mi.us/residents/city_parks/blair_street_park.php

Harrisville State Park

Harrisville State Park features a campground and day-use area nestled in a stand of pine and cedar trees along the sandy shores of Lake Huron. The park is within walking distance of the resort town of Harrisville. Established in 1921, it is one of Michigan's oldest state parks. The original park area consisted of six acres, much smaller than the current 107-acre size. It has accessible cabins, bathrooms, hiking trails, beach, picnic shelters and tables, and camping.

Managing Agency: Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Contact/More Information: 248 State Park Road, Harrisville, MI, 48740; (989) 724-5126;

<http://www.michigandnr.com/ParksandTrails/Details.aspx?id=451&type=SPRK>

Hoeft State Park

Hoeft State Park is a heavily wooded park with a mile of sandy, Lake Huron shoreline. A paved non-motorized trail connects the park to Huron Sunrise Trail which stretches to Rogers City along the beach next to Lake Huron and ends at the world's largest open pit limestone mine. The park has accessible restrooms, playground, and picnic areas.

Managing Agency: Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Contact/More Information: 5001 US-23 North, Rogers City, MI, 49779; 989-734-2543;

TTY/TDD711 (Michigan Relay Center);

<http://www.michigandnr.com/parksandtrails/Details.aspx?id=456&type=SPRK>

Thompsons Harbor State Park

Situated along seven and a half miles of Lake Huron shoreline, this undeveloped park provides a rustic retreat for hikers exploring the park's six miles of trails. Thompson's Harbor now has two rustic cabins. It has an accessible cabin, bathroom, and hiking trail.

Managing Agency: Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Contact/More Information: (989) 734-2543;

<http://www.michigandnr.com/parksandtrails/details.aspx?id=500&type=SPRK#overview>

Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary

Massachusetts



A humpback whale spyhops in Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary. Photo: NOAA, under NOAA Fisheries permit #14245

Overview

Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary is located at the mouth of Massachusetts Bay. The sand and gravel plateau that gives the sanctuary its name was formed by the slow retreat of massive Ice Age glaciers, which sculpted the dynamic seafloor. The nutrient-rich waters above and around the bank support a diverse ecosystem that has been a famous fishing ground for more than 400 years and claims status as the birthplace of East Coast whale watching. Historic New England shipping routes cross the sanctuary, and over the course of centuries, the seafloor has become a repository for shipwrecks, time capsules of our maritime heritage. The entire sanctuary encompasses 842 square miles of open ocean 25 miles east of Boston. Visitors can enjoy whale watching, bird watching, diving, and fishing in this history-rich and biologically-diverse habitat.

General Accessibility

The sanctuary is an offshore site that is only physically accessible by vessels. The access points below lead visitors to the ocean but not to the sanctuary.

Visitor Centers

The sanctuary does not have its own visitor center but is featured in exhibits in [partner institutions](#).

Other Resources

- The sanctuary maintains a [general resources page for visitors](#).
- The sanctuary maintains an [online video gallery](#).
- The commonwealth of Massachusetts maintains an online list of [accessible fishing piers and platforms](#).
- The commonwealth of Massachusetts offers [accessible boating programs](#) in state parks.
- The commonwealth of Massachusetts maintains a list of [beaches in state parks](#) made accessible by boardwalks, beach mats, and ramps.
- The commonwealth of Massachusetts maintains a list of state parks offering [beach wheelchairs](#).

Organizations and Businesses

The sanctuary maintains a [list of whale watching companies](#), many of which have trained naturalists aboard. Please contact the companies to learn about accessibility for each.

Access Points and Resources

(Please note this access point leads visitors to the ocean but not to the sanctuary.)

Cape Cod National Seashore

The great Outer Beach described by Thoreau in the 1800s is protected within Cape Cod National Seashore. Forty miles of pristine sandy beach, marshes, ponds, and uplands support diverse species. Lighthouses, cultural landscapes, and wild cranberry bogs offer a glimpse of Cape Cod's past and continuing ways of life. Swimming beaches and walking and biking trails beckon today's visitors. A mobi-mat has been placed at the approaches to many park beaches, providing a firm surface for wheelchairs and other assistive devices, as well as for strollers. Coast Guard and Herring Cove beaches provide accessible parking, restrooms, changing facilities, and beach wheelchairs. Herring Cove Beach features showers that accommodate wheelchairs. The park also has accessible parking, trails, overlooks, and wayside exhibits. The Salt Pond Visitor Center is fully accessible. Wheelchair and companion seating is provided in the auditorium. Province Lands Visitor Center is accessible via a moderately steep ramp. The park also has accommodations for those who are [blind or have low vision](#), and for those who are [deaf or suffer hearing loss](#). From their website: "Cape Cod National Seashore has many accommodations for

our visitors who need additional accessibility considerations. For additional information, or to check on specific accommodations, please call 508-255-3421.”

Managing Agency: National Park Service

Contact/More Information: 99 Marconi Site Road, Wellfleet, MA 02667 (HQ address); (508) 255-3421 (general contact); 508-255-3421 (for accommodation information or help);

<https://www.nps.gov/caco/index.htm>

Castle Island

A visit to Castle Island combines history and recreation. Tour Fort Independence or take a walk around it. Continue the day sunbathing or swimming at one of the nearby beaches. Carson Beach offers a bath house, an accessible fishing pier, beach mat, and beach wheelchairs.

Managing Agency: Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation

Contact/More Information: 2010 Day Blvd, Boston, MA 02127, (617) 727-5290;

<https://www.mass.gov/locations/castle-island-pleasure-bay-m-street-beach-and-carson-beach>

Constitution Beach Park

Constitution Beach is one of Boston's hidden waterfront gems. Take a swim or head over to the athletic fields. You can see planes flying from Logan Airport and ships sailing through Boston Harbor. This beach has an accessible bath house, beach mat, and beach wheelchairs.

Managing Agency: Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation

Contact/More Information: 0 Barnes Ave., Boston, MA 02128, (781) 485-2804 ext. 105;

<https://www.mass.gov/locations/constitution-beach-park>

Demarest Lloyd State Park

This park is one of the best kept secrets in the Massachusetts forest and park system. Here, an 1800-foot saltwater beach is backed by rambling hills of beach grass and shaded, grassy picnic sites. A broad, scenic marsh lines the Slocum River on the park's eastern edge. The beach is ideal for families with children. The Buzzards Bay surf is calm and shallow, meaning warm water temperatures through most of the summer. It is also a great spot to see egrets, herons, ospreys, terns, and hawks. Access to this rocky beach is provided with beach mat and beach wheelchairs.

Managing Agency: Massachusetts State Parks

Contact/More Information: 115 Barneys Joy Road, Dartmouth, MA 02748; Summer (508) 636-3298; Winter (508) 363-8816; <https://www.mass.gov/locations/demarest-lloyd-state-park>

Fort Phoenix State Reservation

Though one of the smallest state parks, Fort Phoenix offers plenty to see and do. In summer, the main attraction is the beach, which is universally accessible. A boardwalk transitions to beach mat for access to the beach. An accessible bath house and beach wheelchairs are also available. The park also has accessible restroom and picnicking facilities.

Managing Agency: Massachusetts State Parks

Contact/More Information: Green Street, Fairhaven, MA 02719; (508) 992-4524;

<https://www.mass.gov/locations/fort-phoenix-state-reservation>

Horseneck Beach State Reservation

Two miles of shoreline are accessible via a paved route between the dunes and beach mat. You can also use beach wheelchairs. The surf conditions at Horseneck Beach usually prevent you from using floating beach chairs in the water. Please check with the lifeguards on duty at the beach about using chairs in the water. The park also has accessible camping, picnicking, and restroom facilities, and accessible trails.

Managing Agency: Massachusetts State Parks

Contact/More Information: 5 John Reed Road, Westport, MA 02791; (508) 636-8816;

<https://www.mass.gov/locations/horseneck-beach-state-reservation>

Lynn Shore & Nahant Beach Reservation

The reservation is open year-round, but summer is the time to visit and escape the heat. Enjoy swimming in the ocean, launch your boat, or sunbathe on the beach. Beach wheelchairs and two accessible bath houses are also provided. There are also accessible picnicking and restrooms facilities.

Managing Agency: Massachusetts State Parks

Contact/More Information: 1 Nahant Road, Nahant, MA 01908; (781) 485-2803;

<https://www.mass.gov/locations/lynn-shore-nahant-beach-reservation>

Revere Beach Reservation

Over two miles of urban shoreline feature a promenade, bandstand, bath house, shade shelters, beach mat, and beach wheelchairs. This beach also has accessible bathrooms.

Managing Agency: Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation

Contact/More Information: Revere Beach Boulevard, Revere, MA 02151; (781) 485-2803;

<https://www.mass.gov/locations/revere-beach-reservation>

Salisbury Beach State Reservation

This popular 3.8 mile ocean beach has boardwalks over the dunes and beach mats at several access points. All three bath houses are accessible. There are many beach wheelchairs available to use on the sand or in the water. The park also has an accessible nature center and educational programs, and has accessible camping, picnicking, and restroom facilities.

Managing Agency: Massachusetts State Parks

Contact/More Information: 1 Beach Road, Salisbury, MA 01952; (978) 462-4481;

<https://www.mass.gov/locations/salisbury-beach-state-reservation>

Scusset Beach State Reservation

Scusset Beach is located at the southwest corner of the Cape Cod Bay. Enjoy 1.5 miles of beachfront, or take a walk along the jetty to watch ships pass through the Cape Canal. The reservation also offers 98 R.V. sites with hook-ups. This beach has beach mat, beach wheelchairs, and an accessible bath house on the Cape Cod Bay. The park also has accessible educational programs and visitor center, and accessible facilities for camping, picnicking, and restrooms.

Managing Agency: Massachusetts State Parks

Contact/More Information: 20 Scusset Beach Road, Sandwich, MA 02562; (508) 888-0859;

<https://www.mass.gov/locations/scusset-beach-state-reservation>

Monitor National Marine Sanctuary

Virginia



The wreck of the World War II era freighter Manuela lies off the coast of North Carolina, in an area called the Graveyard of the Atlantic. Monitor National Marine Sanctuary is proposed for expansion to include this area that includes several hundred shipwrecks. Photo: Joe Hoyt/NOAA

Overview

Monitor National Marine Sanctuary was designated as the nation's first national marine sanctuary on Jan. 30, 1975. The site was named after the wreck of USS *Monitor*, a Civil War vessel that lies deep beneath the ocean surface off the coast of North Carolina. The *Monitor* was the prototype for a class of U.S. Civil War ironclad, turreted warships that significantly altered both naval technology and marine architecture in the nineteenth century. Designed by the Swedish engineer John Ericsson, the vessel contained all of the emerging innovations that revolutionized warfare at sea. Through a combination of education, archaeology, marine science, and regulatory programs, sanctuary staff conserve and preserve the rich maritime heritage of the Outer Banks of North Carolina and the Graveyard of the Atlantic. Visitors can enjoy the many attractions of The Mariners' Museum and Park, located in Newport News, Virginia.

General Accessibility

The sanctuary is located 16 miles offshore and is accessible only by vessel. The access points below lead visitors to the ocean, but not to the sanctuary.

Visitor Centers

USS Monitor Center

The USS *Monitor* Center, located in The Mariners' Museum and Park in Newport News, Virginia, is an extraordinary exhibit that highlights the iconic Civil War ironclad now protected by NOAA's Monitor National Marine Sanctuary. The Mariners' Museum was named the official repository for the *Monitor* Collection and consists of over 200 tons of priceless artifacts recovered from the *Monitor*. In the conservation complex, museum visitors can stand just feet from the *Monitor*'s revolutionary turret, steam engine, and guns. At the heart of the Center is the award-winning exhibition--Ironclad Revolution--a melding of artifacts, original documents, painting, personal accounts, interactive, and environments that will pique all five senses. The strategies, people, technology, and science behind the historic circumstances of the USS *Monitor* are displayed in a way the public has never before seen.

Call: (757) 591-7789

Email: conservation@MarinersMuseum.org

Address: The Mariners Museum & Park, 100 Museum Drive, Newport News, VA 23606

Accessibility Features: The Mariners' Museum is wheelchair accessible. Wheelchairs are available for visitors upon request.

Other Resources

- The sanctuary maintains a [page of resources](#) for visitors.
- The state of North Carolina maintains a [list of wheelchair accessible trails and boardwalks](#) in state parks.

Organizations and Businesses

- A number of [ANCHOR-recognized dive operators](#) take visitors out to the sanctuary.

Access Points and Resources

(Please note this access point leads visitors to the ocean but not to the sanctuary)

Cape Hatteras National Seashore

The sound of ocean waves, the starry night sky, or the calm of the salt marshes, you can experience it all. Shaped by the forces of water, wind, and storms these islands are ever changing. The plants, wildlife, and people who live here adapt continually. Whether you are enjoying the beach, kayaking the sound, or climbing the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse there is something for everyone to explore! There are numerous [accommodations](#) made at the park for those with disabilities. Bathhouses at Coquina Beach, Salvo Day Use Area, Haulover Day Use Area, Frisco, and Ocracoke have ramps and accessible bathrooms. Accessible bathrooms are

available at all three visitor center locations, as well as many accessible outhouses located throughout the seashore, like at the Buxton Woods picnic area and swim beaches. Several beach access ramps along the seashore have boardwalks to assist in reaching the beach. At the Cape Hatteras Light Station one beach wheelchair is available for loan. Stop by the visitor center to borrow it (phone number and address of person borrowing it required). It must be returned by 4 p.m. each day, even if used on consecutive days. Accessible parking is provided at all visitor center and swim beach locations.

Managing Agency: National Park Service

Contact/More Information: 1401 National Park Drive, Manteo, NC 27954; (252) 473-2111; <https://www.nps.gov/caha/index.htm>



A couple enjoy a stroll along the Virginia beach, courtesy of a beach wheelchair. Photo: Virginia State Parks

SOUTHEAST AND GULF OF MEXICO REGION

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary

Georgia



A sea star hangs on out on a coral reef in Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary. Photo: Greg McFall/NOAA

Overview

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary protects a vibrant hard-bottom area off the Georgia coast. The reef's scattered rocky outcroppings and ledges provide homes for an abundance of marine life. Crabs, lobsters, soft corals, sponges, sea stars and other organisms form a dense carpet of living creatures, covering the nooks and crannies of Gray's Reef and giving it the name "live bottom." The reef attracts more than 200 species of fish, including black sea bass, snappers, groupers, and mackerels. Loggerhead sea turtles, a threatened species, forage and rest year-round at Gray's Reef, and the reef is within the critical habitat and only known winter calving ground of the highly endangered North Atlantic right whale. The 22- square-mile sanctuary is the only protected natural reef and one of a few natural marine protected areas in the Atlantic Ocean between Cape Hatteras, North Carolina and Cape Canaveral, Florida.

General Accessibility

The sanctuary is located 19 miles offshore and is accessible only by vessel. The access points provided below lead visitors to the ocean but not to the sanctuary.

Visitor Centers

Gray's Reef does not have a visitor center, but a number of [museums and aquariums](#) house kiosks and exhibits about the sanctuary. You can also enjoy the sanctuary's interactive traveling exhibit, currently hosted at the [Savannah Visitor's Center](#).

Other Resources

- The sanctuary maintains a [page of visitors' resources](#).
- The sanctuary has an online [virtual dive gallery](#).
- The state of Georgia maintains [an online brochure](#) describing accommodations in state parks.
- We regularly post beautiful photos and short videos of Gray's Reef on our [Facebook](#) page.

Access Points and Resources

(Please note this access point leads visitors to the ocean but not to the sanctuary)

Cumberland Island National Seashore

St Marys is the gateway to Cumberland Island, Georgia's largest and southernmost barrier island. Here pristine maritime forests, undeveloped beaches, and wide marshes whisper the stories of both man and nature. Natives, missionaries, enslaved African Americans, and wealthy industrialists all walked here. Cumberland Island is also home to over 9,800 acres of Congressionally-designated Wilderness. At the mainland location in St. Marys, the Headquarters, visitor center and gift shop, museum, restrooms, and ferry are all accessible. [Accessibility](#) varies from island to island. From the website: "All Island trails are sand. Weather conditions impact the ease of movement on trails. All-terrain Beach wheelchairs are available upon request at either dock. These non-motorized wheelchairs are designed with balloon tires for ease of movement in sand. Please notify reservation agent when making ferry reservations to insure wheelchair will be available. Currently three wheelchairs are available for use."

Managing Agency: National Park Service

Contact/More Information: 101 Wheeler Street, St. Marys, GA 31558; (912) 882-4336;
<https://www.nps.gov/cuis/index.htm>

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

Florida



A cluster of cormorants rests among the roots of mangroves in Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. Photo: David J. Ruck/NOAA

Overview

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary supports one of the most diverse assemblages of underwater plants and animals in North America. Although best known for its coral reefs, the shallow, nearshore waters contain interconnecting and interdependent marine habitats that include fringing mangroves, seagrass meadows, hard bottom regions, patch reefs, and bank reefs. This complex marine ecosystem is the foundation for the tourism and commercial fishing-based economies that are so important to Florida. Encompassing over 3,800 square miles of marine water surrounding the Florida Keys, this sanctuary supports over 6,000 species of marine life and protects shipwrecks and other important pieces of American maritime heritage. Visitors to the sanctuary are encouraged to enjoy the many recreational activities it has to offer, including world-class fishing, diving, swimming, snorkeling, and kayaking.

General Accessibility

The sanctuary runs continuously along the 90-mile chain of islands and abuts Biscayne and Everglades national parks. Public access to the ocean and the sanctuary is generous along both the inner and outer margins.

Visitor Centers

Florida Keys Eco-Discovery Center

The Eco-Discovery Center features more than 6,000 square feet of interactive exhibits showcasing the enticing waters of Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, two national parks, and four national wildlife refuges. Immerse yourself in the Keys with the center's Living Reef exhibit, a 2,500-gallon reef tank with living corals and tropical fish, or learn about what it's like to live beneath the waves on *Aquarius*, the world's only underwater ocean laboratory!

Call: (305) 809-4750

Address: 35 E Quay Rd, Key West, FL 33040

Accessibility Features:

- Accessible parking
- Accessible entry
- Accessible bathrooms/water fountains
- Accessible exhibits and materials, includes access to all exhibit areas, and theater seating areas

Other Resources

- The sanctuary maintains a web page with [visitor resources](#).
- The sanctuary offers a [virtual dive gallery](#) to various interesting areas.
- The State of Florida maintains a [list](#) of wheelchair accessible features in state parks.

Organizations and Businesses

- [Tranquil Adventures](#) is a Key Largo-based charter boat company providing service to people with disabilities and featuring wheelchair accessible vessels and lifts to help individuals in and out of the water. Contact: 225 Upper Matecumbe Rd., Key Largo, FL 33037; (305) 451-2102
- A number of [Blue Star-recognized dive charter boats and fishing guides](#) provide access to the sanctuary.

Access Points and Resources

Bahia Honda State Park

Featuring an award winning beach and historic bridge, Bahia Honda State Park at mile marker 37 in the Florida Keys has become a favorite destination for visitors to our island paradise. The park, encompassing over 500 acres and an offshore island offers some of the best snorkeling and beachcombing in Florida. The perfect and quiet getaway for the entire family. Accessible amenities include a cabin rental, campsites, beach access ramps, beach wheelchair, mobi-chair for water access, day use showers, picnic pavilion, barbeque grills, and fishing areas. The park suffered damage from Hurricane Irma in 2017 and all resources and amenities, including those for [accessibility](#), might not be available. Contact the park for the latest status.

Managing Agency: Florida State Parks

Contact/More Information: 36850 Overseas Highway, Big Pine Key, FL, 33043; (305) 872-2353; <https://www.floridastateparks.org/park/bahia-honda>

John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park

Established in 1963, John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park covers approximately 178 nautical square miles of coral reefs, seagrass beds, and mangrove swamps. The park contains a wide variety of tropical vegetation, shore birds, and marine life. The park has a number of [accessible amenities](#), including wheelchair-friendly concessionaire vessels (such as a [glass bottom boat](#)), dock, playground, restrooms, picnic facilities, and campsites. A Mobi-mat provides access to the beach.

Managing Agency: Florida State Parks

Contact/More Information: 102601 Overseas Highway Key Largo, FL 33037; (305) 451-6300; <https://www.floridastateparks.org/park/Pennekamp>

Long Key State Park

This island was once the site of Henry Flagler's Long Key Fishing Camp, destroyed during the Labor Day Hurricane of 1935 and never reopened. Today, visitors can still spend the night and fish the famous flats at Long Key State Park's full service campground. The 60 oceanfront campsites are well known for their views overlooking the aqua blue waters of the Florida Keys. Day-use visitors can also fish the flats, or choose to hike, kayak, swim, snorkel, bird watch, or picnic. There are several picnic tables with grills available along the shoreline and the Atlantic Ocean is easily accessible via a dune crossover. Sea kayaks can be rented at the ranger station, or you can bring your own boat and paddle through a series of lagoons. Birding is popular along the 1.1 mile long Golden Orb Trail which leads visitors through five natural communities. Along this trail there is a boardwalk through the mangroves, an observation tower, and an abundance of plant and animal life. The other short trail in the park is the Layton Trail, which allows access to the bayside waters. The park has a beach wheelchair, accessible shower and restroom facilities, and a ramp to the boardwalk.

Managing Agency: Florida State Parks

Contact/More Information: 67400 Overseas Hwy, Long Key, FL 33001; (305) 664-4815; <https://www.floridastateparks.org/park/Long-Key>

Sombrero Beach

Sombrero Beach is a turtle nesting beach. From April through October it is not unusual to have loggerhead turtles (primarily) coming on to the beach at night to lay their eggs. During active turtle nesting season the city limits human activities in the vicinity of active turtle nest establishments. Turtle nest areas typically represents less than 10 percent of the available beach area. The remainder of the beach is open for our visitors and residents to enjoy. The park was redeveloped in 2001 for total accessibility including beach access, picnic pavilions, volleyball courts, restrooms, and showers. The park was damaged by Hurricane Irma in 2017; please check for status before visiting.

Managing Agency: City of Marathon, Florida

Contact/More Information: Sombrero Beach Rd, Marathon, Fl 33050; (305) 743-0033;

<http://www.ci.marathon.fl.us/government/parks/city-parks-and-beaches/>



A park in Florida notifies visitors of its beach wheelchairs. ©Mark D L via Flickr and under Creative Commons 2.0 License

Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary

Texas



A sandbar shark cruises the depths of Flower Gardens National Marine Sanctuary. Photo: G.P. Schmahl/NOAA

Overview

Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, comprised of three banks about 70-115 miles off the Texas-Louisiana coast, is a true treasure of the Gulf of Mexico—a Caribbean oasis in an unexpected place. East Flower Garden Bank, West Flower Garden Bank, and Stetson Bank are actually small underwater mountains created by salt domes. The tops of these banks are covered in gardens of coral, sponges, and algae that provide habitat for a variety of tropical wildlife. Visitors to the sanctuary can enjoy diving and fishing on some of the healthiest coral reefs in the world, with over 50 percent of the bottom covered by huge boulders of star, brain, and other corals.

General Accessibility

The sanctuary is a set of offshore components deep in the Gulf of Mexico and accessible only by boat. The access points provided below lead visitors to the ocean but not to the sanctuary.

Visitor Centers

Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary doesn't have a visitor center but a number of [partner zoos and aquariums](#) house exhibits about the sanctuary, as well as a [traveling exhibit](#), which is wheelchair accessible.

Other Resources

- A [resource page](#) for visitors is provided by the sanctuary.
- A [virtual dive gallery](#) of the sanctuary can be found online.
- The state of Texas maintains a [list of wheelchair accessible fishing piers and other locations](#).

Organizations and Businesses

- A number of [dive charter vessels](#) provide access to the sanctuary.
- A number of [fishing charter vessels](#) provide access to the sanctuary.

Access Points and Resources

(Please note this access point leads visitors to the ocean but not to the sanctuary)

East Beach (R.A. Apffel Park)

Located at the far eastern tip of the island, East Beach is famous for its great festivals and live concerts held throughout the summer months. The beach park is home to a pavilion, boardwalk and entertainment stage as well as restrooms, showers, chair and umbrella rentals, children's playground, concessions and other amenities. The first weekend in June, the park hosts the annual American Institute of Architects (AIA) Sandcastle Competition where thousands flock to see elaborate structures built from sand. Beach wheelchairs are available for rental.

Managing Agency: City of Galveston, Texas

Contact/More Information: 1923 Boddeker Drive, Galveston, TX 77550; (409) 797-5111;
http://www.galvestonbeachinfo.com/East_Beach.asp

Kelly Hamby Nature Trail

The Kelly Hamby Nature Trail provides a natural habitat for birds such as the scissor-tailed flycatchers and orchard orioles, as well as migrant birds like buntings, tanagers, cuckoos, and warblers. Be sure to visit during the annual Monarch migration in late September and early October. The park features accessible parking and a walking trail, with beach access for swimming.

Managing Agency: County of Brazoria, Texas

Contact/More Information: 12083-12135 Bluewater Hwy, Freeport, TX 77541; (979) 864-1541 (Brazoria County Parks Department);
<http://brazoriacountytx.gov/departments/parks-department/kelly-hamby-nature-trail>

Stewart Beach

Named one of the “10 Best Beaches for Families” by Family Vacation Critic in 2013, Stewart Beach is Galveston’s premier family beach park. Located where historic Broadway Avenue meets the Seawall, Stewart Beach offers plenty of amenities for a day at the beach as well as regular supervision of highly trained lifeguards. The park is home to a pavilion, concessions, restrooms, showers, chair and umbrella rentals, beach volleyball courts, children's playground and more. Beach wheelchairs are available for rental.

Managing Agency: City of Galveston, Texas

Contact/More Information: 201 Seawall Boulevard, Galveston, TX 77550; (409) 797-5182; https://www.galvestonbeachinfo.com/Stewart_Beach.asp

WEST COAST REGION

Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary

California



A northern elephant seal hangs out on the beach of San Miguel Island in Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, Photo: Robert Schwemmer/NOAA

Overview

The waters around the five islands within Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary combine warm and cool currents to create an exceptional breeding ground for many species of plants and animals. Forests of giant kelp are home to numerous populations of fish and invertebrates. Every year, over 27 species of whales and dolphins visit or inhabit the sanctuary including the rare blue, humpback, and sei whales. On the islands, seabird colonies and sea lions flourish, while overhead brown pelicans and western gulls search the water for food. Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary is located 25 miles off the coast of Santa Barbara, California. Visitors to the sanctuary can enjoy recreational opportunities such as tidepooling, diving, snorkeling, kayaking, and surfing. The sanctuary surrounds the five Channel Islands that comprise Channel Islands National Park.

General Accessibility

The sanctuary is contiguous around the offshore islands of San Miguel, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz, and Anacapa; a separate component surrounds Santa Barbara. All are far offshore (11 to 70 miles) and the sanctuary must be accessed by vessels departing from the mainland, or by aircraft that can land at two of the islands. The islands themselves are generally not readily accessible for visitors with special needs, but some transportation service providers are able to provide partial accommodations. The access points and services listed below include mainland coastal parks and visitor center locations, as well as some operators that provide offshore access to Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary and Channel Islands National Park.

Visitor Centers

(On the mainland)

Channel Islands Boating Center

The Channel Islands Boating Center (CIBC) provides educational and recreational opportunities for youth and adults of Ventura County, the California State University Channel Islands community, and others from around the state. While the main focus of the center is to teach boating skills and support boaters, the CIBC also provides other educational resources on the local marine environment and features extensive exhibits and interactive kiosks featuring information about Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary.

Managing Agency: California State University Channel Islands

Contact/More Information: 3880 Bluefin Circle, Oxnard, CA 93035, (805) 437-2628,
<http://www.ciboating.org/>

Accessibility Features:

- Accessible parking
- Accessible bathrooms/water fountains/other facilities
- Accessible and companion seating
- Accessible exhibits and materials
- Special programs

Other Resources

- The sanctuary provides a page with [resources for visitors](#).
- California State Parks maintains a [website](#) of accessible features and amenities in state parks.
- Channel Islands National Park maintains a [website](#) with accessibility information.

Organizations and Businesses

Many businesses provide rental equipment, chartered excursions, or other commercially operated trips that can put you in touch with Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary. Some of the businesses that spend a great deal of time in or above sanctuary waters include:

Island Packers

Serving as a passenger ferry service, whale watch vessel, and marine excursion operator, Island Packers visits all five of the islands that make up Channel Islands National Park and Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary. The crew offloads passengers from their vessels onto each of the five islands, with access being at piers and landings, some of which require use of a ladder. Island specific landing/access information:

- **Anacapa Island**

Frequency of Trips: Year round, variable schedule 3-7 days per week

Travel Time from Ventura and Oxnard Harbors: 1 hour

Landing Conditions: Visitors must climb from the boat up a steel-rung ladder to a dock. Once ashore, visitors must climb 157 stairs to the top of the island. Non-landing trips are available.

- **Santa Cruz Island**

Frequency of Trips: Year round, variable schedule 5-7 days per week

Travel Time from Ventura Harbor: 1 hour

Landing Conditions: Visitors must climb from the boat up a steel-rung ladder to a pier at Scorpion Anchorage and Prisoners Harbor. When the piers are closed, landings are via skiff onto the beach.

- **Santa Rosa Island**

Frequency of Trips: Boat trips run April through early November, 2-4 days per week

Travel Time from Ventura Harbor: Boat trips are 3 hours

Landing Conditions: Boat visitors must climb from the boat up a steel-rung ladder to a pier at Bechers Bay. When the pier is closed, landings are via skiff onto the beach.

- **San Miguel Island**

Frequency of Trips: Boat trips run April through early November, 4-8 days per month

Travel Time from Ventura Harbor: Boat trips are 4 hours

Landing Conditions: Boat visitors are skiffed onto the beach—be prepared to waterproof gear and possibly to get wet. Strong winds and rough seas are possible.

- **Santa Barbara Island**

Frequency of Trips: Spring through Fall, variable schedule 2-4 days per month

Travel Time from Ventura Harbor: 3 hours

Landing Conditions: Visitors must climb a steel-rung ladder to the top of the pier from a skiff. Once ashore, visitors must walk uphill 1/4 mile with 131 long steps to the top of the island.

Contact/More Information: 1691 Spinnaker Dr #105B, Ventura, CA 93001, 805-642-1393, <http://islandpackers.com/>

Accessibility Features: Limited due to vessel and island logistics, but inquire in advance for possible assistance.

Channel Islands Aviation

Public airplane transportation to Channel Islands National Park, passing over the waters of the sanctuary, is available year-round to Santa Rosa Island by park concessionaire Channel Islands Aviation. Also, on a trial basis, flights are available to San Miguel Island as well. Flights depart from Camarillo airport.

Contact/More Information: 305 Durley Avenue, Camarillo, CA 93010, 805-987-1301, www.flycia.com

Accessibility Features: Somewhat limited due to the nature of flight operations, small aircraft, and rugged terrain at the island landing sites, but inquire in advance for possible assistance.

Condor Express

The Condor Express is one of Santa Barbara's most modern whale watching, dinner cruise, party cruise, and private charter boats. Trips run year-round and frequently feature whale watching excursions to Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary.

Contact/More Information: 301 West Cabrillo Boulevard, Santa Barbara, CA, 93101, 888-77WHALE or 805-882-0088, <https://condorexpress.com/>

Accessibility Features: Somewhat limited due to the nature of vessel operations, but inquire in advance for possible assistance.

Channel Islands Adventure Company

As an official concessionaire service to Channel Islands National Park, Channel Islands Adventure Company leads tours and helps visitors explore the waters of Santa Cruz Island, taking tens of thousands of visitors kayaking in the island waters and sea caves. Based out of Scorpion Anchorage on Santa Cruz Island, guided snorkeling trips and gear rental is also provided.

Contact/More Information: 34 E Haley St., Santa Barbara, CA 93101, (805) 884-WAVE or (805) 884-9283, <https://www.islandkayaking.com/>

Accessibility Features: Limited due to island transport logistics and the nature of ocean kayaking, but inquire in advance for possible assistance.

Truth Aquatics

Operating out of Santa Barbara Harbor and providing a variety of scuba dive trips (single-day and multi-day), educational charter trips, and other recreational excursions, Truth Aquatics frequently takes visitors to the waters of Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary.

Contact/More Information: 301 W Cabrillo Blvd, Santa Barbara, CA 93101, 805-962-1127, <https://truthaquatics.net/>

Accessibility Features: Somewhat limited due to the nature of vessel operations, but inquire in advance for possible assistance.

Channel Islands Sportfishing Center

Providing sportfishing charter trips to the sanctuary, including Anacapa Island, Santa Cruz Island, Santa Barbara Island, Santa Rosa Island and San Miguel Island. Offering a variety of trips, including local half-day trips, ¾ day islands trips and overnight outer island trips.

Contact/More Information: 4151 S Victoria Ave, Oxnard, CA 93035, 805-382-1612, <http://www.channelislandsharbor.org/listing/channel-islands-sportfishing-center/>

Accessibility Features: Limited due to the nature of boat operations, but inquire in advance for possible assistance.

Wave Walker Charters

Providing sportfishing trips, whale watching, and other marine excursions out of Santa Barbara Harbor to various coastal areas and waters of Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary.

Contact/More Information: Santa Barbara Harbor, (805)964-2046 or (805)895-3273, <http://www.wavewalker.com/>

Accessibility Features: Limited due to the nature of boat operations, but the operator has experience so inquire in advance for assistance. See also, below: Seafaring Opportunities for Those In Need (SOFTIN).

Stardust Sportfishing

Providing sportfishing trips, education and research trips, and other marine excursions out of Santa Barbara Harbor to various coastal areas, including Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary.

Contact/More Information: 301 West Cabrillo Blvd, Santa Barbara, CA 93101, 805-963-3564, <https://www.stardustsportfishing.com/>

Accessibility Features: Limited due to the nature of boat operations, but inquire in advance for assistance.

Seafaring Opportunities for Those In Need (SOFTIN)

SOFTIN is a 501.3c Non-Profit Corporation operating out of Santa Barbara Harbor that provides ocean experiences within the Santa Barbara Channel, including occasionally within the sanctuary. Their mission is to “teach enabling life skills and sense of self-esteem to the challenged (including but not limited to; disabled/handicapped/impaired/elderly/youth) through: one-on-one hands-on educational lessons and experiences at sea; engaging in marlinspike seamanship; viewing, identification, and monitoring of marine mammals and seabirds; practicing subsistence/recreational fishing skills focusing on the principles of ethical angling; teaching ocean conservation values and water quality issues; learning about the people, infrastructure, vessel types, and general job opportunities among our waterfront communities; monitoring and educating the public and resource managers about sea life and habitat.”

Contact/More Information: 691 Camino Campana Santa Barbara, CA 93111, 805-964-2046, <http://softininc.org>

Other Businesses

There are many other ways to enjoy recreational activities within Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, and many businesses that can help provide the equipment, transportation, and support needed to enjoy a variety of activities. These businesses are generally based out of the three coastal harbors that are adjacent to the sanctuary: Santa Barbara Harbor, Ventura Harbor, and Channel Islands Harbor. To rent or charter a sailboat, book a scuba dive trip, rent kayaks, or enjoy a chartered fishing trip, check with a variety of businesses operating out of each of the three local harbors. For more information:

- Santa Barbara Harbor: 132-A Harbor Way, Santa Barbara, CA 93109.
Business Directory: <http://www.visitsbharbor.com/merchant-directory/>
- Ventura Harbor: 1603 Anchors Way Drive, Ventura, CA, 93001
Port District information: <https://venturaharbor.com/>
Ventura Harbor Village: <https://www.venturaharborvillage.com/visitor-information/>
- Channel Islands Harbor: 3900 Pelican Way, Oxnard, CA 93035.
- Business Directory: <http://www.channelislandsharbor.org/business-directory/>

Mainland Coastal Access Points and Resources at County and State Parks

The following mainland coastal parks in the counties of Santa Barbara and Ventura are not within Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, but provide coastal access and views of the Santa Barbara Channel and marine sanctuary beyond. California State Parks maintains a [website](#) of accessible features and amenities in state parks.

Arroyo Burro Beach

Known for its sandy beaches, swimming, surfing, and surf fishing, this park also offers a cool grassy area for picnics and playing. From their website: “Santa Barbara County Parks is proud to offer a free-of-charge beach wheelchair at this location. To request the use of a beach wheelchair, please contact the Arroyo Burro Beach Ranger office or ask any on-site Ranger or Lifeguard.”

Managing Agency: Santa Barbara County

Contact/More Information: 2981 Cliff Dr, Santa Barbara, CA 93109; (805) 687-3714 or (805) 729-7508; <https://www.countyofsb.org/parks/day-use/arroyo-burro-beach.sbc>

Carpinteria State Beach

Twelve miles south of Santa Barbara, Carpinteria State Beach offers a mile of beach for swimming, surf fishing, tidepool exploring, and camping. Although dogs are not allowed on beach, we have a great picnic area where they are allowed to enjoy the outdoors as well. Lifeguards patrol the beach year round and lifeguard towers are staffed roughly from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend. [Accessible features](#) include select campsites, restroom and shower facilities, parking, and picnic areas. The Tar Pit, Jellybowl, and Ranger

Office parking lots each have three designated accessible parking spaces and are near beach access. Call (805) 684-2811 to reserve a beach wheelchair.

Managing Agency: California State Parks

Contact/More Information: 205 Palm Ave, Carpinteria, CA 93013; (805) 968-1033;
https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=599

El Capitan State Beach

The park offers visitors a sandy beach, rocky tidepools, and stands of sycamore and oaks along El Capitán Creek. It's a perfect setting for swimming, fishing, surfing, picnicking, and camping. A stairway provides access from the bluffs to the beach area. Beach wheelchairs are available for use by the public with no cost. Contact a ranger or lifeguard for additional information. The park also offers other [accessible features](#) including campsites, parking, picnic sites, and campfire area.

Managing Agency: California State Parks

Contact/More Information: exit #117 from Highway 101 Goleta, CA 93117; (805) 968-1033; http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=601

Gaviota State Park

A popular spot for swimming, picnicking, and surf fishing, Gaviota State Park is located off route 101, 33 miles west of Santa Barbara. A pier on the west end of the beach is used by anglers and scuba divers, and surfers use a boat hoist on the pier to access the waters of the Santa Barbara Channel. A steep trail leads hikers to upland portions of the park. Camping on a first-come, first-served basis in a small campground accommodates tents or trailers up to 25 feet. Winter flooding may occasionally close park. [Accessible features](#) include a beach wheelchair (contact the Camp Host at site #38 to reserve), picnic tables, restrooms, and parking.

Managing Agency: California State Parks

Contact/More Information: 10 Refugio Beach Road Goleta, CA 93117; (805) 968-1033;
https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=606

Jalama Beach County Park

The park is approximately an hour drive from Santa Barbara and a 45-minute drive from Lompoc. The park is subject to high winds and rough surf. Lifeguards are on duty during the summer months, however visitors swim at their own risk. Day-use picnic areas provide tables and raised fire boxes. Additional activities include surfing, whale-watching, bird watching, nature photography, and fishing. Many protected California native plants like sand verbena, saltbush, and sea rocket grow within park boundaries. From their website: "Santa Barbara County Parks is proud to offer a free-of-charge beach wheelchair at this location. To request the use of a beach wheelchair, please an on-site Ranger or Lifeguard."

Managing Agency: Santa Barbara County

Contact/More Information: 9999 Jalama Road, Lompoc, CA 93436; (805) 736-3504;
<https://www.countyofsb.org/parks/jalama.sbc>

Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park

This park is renowned for miles of pristine sand dunes along the shore and many sensitive plants and animals including western snowy plover and California least tern. Beach access, bird and whale watching, fishing, hiking areas, picnic areas (no BBQs/cooking permitted). Seasonal restrictions during the nesting bird season (Mar 1 - Oct 1) apply and are posted onsite. From their website: “Santa Barbara County Parks is proud to offer a free-of-charge beach wheelchair at this location. To request the use of a beach wheelchair, please contact the Rancho Guadalupe Dunes kiosk or ask any on-site Ranger or Lifeguard.”

Managing Agency: Santa Barbara County

Contact/More Information: 6999 W Main, Guadalupe, CA 93434; (805) 729-8461 or (805) 729-7508; <https://www.countyofsb.org/parks/day-use/rancho-guadalupe-dunes.sbc>

Leo Carillo State Park

Leo Carrillo State Park has 1.5 miles of beach for swimming, surfing, windsurfing, surf fishing and beachcombing. The beach also has tidepools, coastal caves, and reefs for exploring. Giant sycamores shade the main campgrounds. The park also features backcountry hiking. [Accessible features](#) include campsites, restrooms and showers, parking, and trails. Beach wheelchairs are available to check out. Contact park staff upon entry into the park, or phone (310) 457-8143 for more information. North Beach: This beach is accessed by following the park entrance road under Highway 1. Accessible parking and restrooms are available. South Beach: This beach is accessed via the parking lot just past the park entrance station. Accessible parking and a portable restroom are available. The beach is a short distance from the parking lot, and is accessed via a route that crosses under Highway 1. The route from the parking lot to the beach is generally accessible, and terminates at a restroom building that is usable.

Managing Agency: California State Parks

Contact/More Information: 35000 Pacific Coast Hwy, Malibu, CA 90265; (310) 457-8143; http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=616

Refugio State Beach

The park offers excellent coastal fishing as well as trails and picnic sites. Palm trees planted near Refugio Creek give a distinctive look to the beach and camping area. Lifeguards patrol the beach year around while lifeguard towers are only staffed roughly from Memorial day weekend through Labor day weekend. Beach wheelchairs are available for use by the public at no cost. Contact a ranger or lifeguard for additional information. Other [accessible features](#) include campsites, parking, restrooms, showers, and picnic sites.

Managing Agency: California State Parks

Contact/More Information: 10 Refugio Beach Road, Goleta CA 93117; (805) 968-1033; http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=603

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary

California



This sea otter is chilling in Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Photo: Steve Lonhart/NOAA

Overview

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, located in the Pacific Ocean off the central California coast, was designated and protected as a national marine sanctuary in 1992. This vast area stretches almost 300 miles north to south, extends an average of 30 miles offshore, and encompasses over 6,090 square miles. The sanctuary manages recreational and commercial uses and protects natural and cultural resources, water quality, habitats, and its bountiful resident and migratory marine life. In the southern half, visitors will find a mostly undeveloped shoreline of rocky cliffs and steep mountainsides. The northern shoreline is similar but has a number of small towns and moderate-size cities. Visitors can enjoy fishing, surfing, diving, kayaking, and tidepooling. Additionally, visitors can view the stunning coastline without getting wet by camping, hiking, biking, and touring by car.

General Accessibility

The sanctuary is coastal, stretching nearly 300 miles from Cambria to just north of San Francisco. General public access is plentiful along the coast, with multiple sanctuary access points.

Visitor Services

Sanctuary Exploration Center

Located just steps away from the ocean and Santa Cruz Wharf, the center features state-of-the-art exhibits and interactive displays highlighting the sanctuary and its incredible underwater environment. Visitors can explore the sanctuary's remarkable marine environment as well as their personal role in protecting one of our nation's underwater treasures.

Call: 831-421-9993

Address: 35 Pacific Ave, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Accessibility Features:

- Accessible parking
- Accessible bathrooms/water fountains/other facilities
- Accessible and companion seating
- Accessible exhibits and materials
- Special programs

Coastal Discovery Center

A joint venture between Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and California State Parks, the Coastal Discovery Center is located on beautiful San Simeon Bay. The center offers interactive exhibits and education programs which features the cultural and natural resources of the sanctuary and California State Parks. Visitors can explore the interface of land and sea in the area, drawing people for its rich bounty, economic opportunity, recreation, and inspiration for protecting these special places.

Call: (805) 927-6575

Address: CA-1 & Slo San Simeon Rd, San Simeon, CA 93452

Accessibility Features:

- Accessible parking
- Accessible bathrooms/water fountains/other facilities
- Accessible exhibits and materials
- Special programs

Other Resources

- The sanctuary provides a [page of resources](#) for visitors.
- California State Parks maintains a [website](#) of accessible features and amenities in state parks.

Organizations and Businesses

- Shared Adventures, based in Santa Cruz, California, hosts a Day at the Beach each year for people with disabilities. They also offer other outdoor recreation events and projects. From their website: “Here at Shared Adventures, we get people outdoors and moving beyond limitation. A non-profit organization dedicated to improving quality of life for those with disabilities, we believe that recreation, fun, challenge, and access to the outdoors are essential to health and fulfillment.”

To contact, check the links above or:
 Email: info@sharedadventures.org
 Call: (831) 459-7210
 Address: PO Box 396, Santa Cruz, CA 95061
- [Amazing Surf Adventures](#), based in San Luis Obispo, California, conducts veteran-oriented surfing-based programs such as [Operation Surf](#) and [Operation Surf 4 Veterans](#). From their website: “Our mission is to help wounded and injured active-duty military and veteran heroes move forward in a positive direction through an epic, life-changing surfing experience that builds confidence and healing. One wave at a time.”

To contact, check the links above or:
 Email: info@amazingsurfadventures.org
 Call: (805) 544-SURF
 Address: PO Box 1581, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

Access Points and Resources

Año Nuevo State Park

The park’s rich variety of natural and cultural resources draws visitors from around the world, including an extraordinary wilderness experience, where every year up to 10,000 elephant seals return to breed, give birth, and molt their skin amongst the scenic dunes and beaches. The park features the Marine Education Center boasting a natural history exhibit, bookstore, and theater. This complex is housed in the historic nineteenth century dairy ranch of the Dickerman/Steele family. These restored buildings recall the early American settlers, while the midden sites throughout the Natural Preserve tell us the story of the Quiroste Indians that lived peacefully here for thousands of years prior to the 1600s. Cove Beach is a short walk from here for beachgoers and surfers. The park has [accessible features](#) including trails, picnic sites, and beach wheelchairs. From their website: “During the roving season, from April 1st to November 30th, equal access tours are organized on demand. A two week advance notice is recommended. During the elephant seal breeding season, December 15th through March 31st, visitors with a mobility disability may tour the breeding area on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays and on Special Holiday Mondays. A wheelchair accessible van transports visitors to an accessible boardwalk that leads to where the seals are. Every person in need of mobility assistance may bring up to 2 people on the tour. Reservations are required and may be made starting from November 1st until

tours are full. For reservations and further information, please contact the Equal Access Coordination Office at Ano.EqualAccess@parks.ca.gov or (650) 879-2033.”

Managing Agency: California State Parks

Contact/More Information: 1 New Years Creek Rd, Pescadero, CA 94060; (650) 879-2025; http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=523

Asilomar State Beach

The park is a narrow, one-mile strip of sandy beach and rocky coves. A $\frac{3}{4}$ mile coast walking trail is open to pedestrians. In addition to other [accessible features](#), the trail is accessible and a beach wheelchair is available upon request at the Registration Desk. Vehicle parking as well as a bicycle lane is adjacent to the beach and coast trail along Sunset Drive. There are no restrooms or picnicking facilities on the State Beach. Restrooms open to the public are located at the Phoebe Hearst Social Hall inside the Conference Grounds.

Managing Agency: California State Parks

Contact/More Information: 804 Crocker Avenue, Pacific Grove, CA 93950; (831) 646-6440; http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=566

Hearst San Simeon State Park

The park is one of the oldest units of the California State Park System. The coastal bluffs and promontories of the scenic park offer unobstructed views of the ocean and rocky shore. A 3.3 mile trail runs through parts of the San Simeon Natural Preserve and the Washburn Campground. The trail includes scenic overlooks, rest-stop benches, and interpretive panels with information on wildlife and habitat. A portion of the trail along the seasonal wetland is wheelchair accessible (along with other [accessible amenities](#)). A unique opportunity to view northern elephant seals is available at the Elephant Seal Boardwalk in Hearst San Simeon State Park. This vantage point provides an ideal location to view these marine mammals from a safe distance. Located around Point Piedras Blancas, the elephant seal rookery extends along 6 miles of the shoreline. Elephant seals may be seen throughout the year, though the largest populations and the most activity are during the months of late January, April, and October. Although elephant seals spend most of their lives in the open ocean, they arrive at the rookery to give birth, breed, molt, and rest from long migrations in the ocean in search of food. The viewing areas are open to the public year round and are wheelchair accessible. Docents are on site to answer questions. No reservations are required and there is no fee. Restroom facilities are not available at this location.

Managing Agency: California State Parks

Contact/More Information: 500 San Simeon Creek Road, Cambria, CA 93428; (805) 927-2035; http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=590

Monterey State Beach

This beach is a favorite place for surfers and tidepool watchers. Fishing is popular, too. The cities of Monterey and Seaside share the park, which has three separate beaches approximately a mile apart. The underwater area of the park attracts scuba divers. Visitors also enjoy kayaking, kite-flying, and volleyball. The flat beach is an excellent place for beachcombing. [Accessible](#)

[features](#) include a beach wheelchair. From their website: “A beach wheelchair is available for use on a first-come first-serve basis at the Monterey Sector Lifeguard Headquarters, located at 2211 Garden Road, Monterey CA 93940. Call ahead at (831) 649-2808 to make arrangements.”

Managing Agency: California State Parks

Contact/More Information: Del Monte Avenue at Park Avenue, Monterey, CA 93940; 831-649-2836; https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=576

Natural Bridges State Beach

This park and beach is an excellent vantage point for viewing shore birds, migrating whales, as well as seals and otters playing offshore. Further along the beach, public access tidepools offer a glimpse of life beneath the sea. Low tides reveal sea stars, shore crabs, sea anemones, and other colorful ocean life. The park also includes a large area of coastal scrub and grasslands, with bright native wildflowers in the spring. Moore Creek flows through the park, forming freshwater wetlands and a salt marsh before it reaches the sea. [Accessible amenities](#) include restrooms, trail, boardwalk, and visitor center. From their website: “Adjacent to the entrance station is a generally accessible viewing platform with benches that overlook the beach and the natural bridges. A beach wheelchair is available. Call (831) 423-4609 for information.”

Managing Agency: California State Parks

Contact/More Information: Del Monte Avenue at Park Avenue, Monterey, CA 93940; (831) 649-2836; http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=541

New Brighton State Beach

This Santa Cruz County beach features picnic areas, swimming, fishing, and a nearby forest of Monterey pine and coastal live oak. The camping area is located on a bluff overlooking northern Monterey Bay. The visitor center at New Brighton State Beach offers you a chance to see, explore, and experience the stories of people, settlers, and cultures that are a part of this region’s rich history. The Pacific Migrations Visitor Center explores the many Pacific Rim migrations, both by people and by creatures of the air and sea. The visitor center and park store are open during the spring and summer season. The park has a number of [accessible features](#) including a beach wheelchair.

Managing Agency: California State Parks

Contact/More Information: 1500 Park Ave, Capitola, CA 95010; (831) 464-6329; https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=542

Point Lobos State Natural Reserve

The park is outstanding for sightseeing, photography, painting, nature study, picnicking, diving, and jogging. This area contains headlands, coves and rolling meadows. The offshore area forms one of the richest underwater habitats in the world popular with divers. Wildlife includes seals, sea lions, sea otters and migrating gray whales (from December to May). Thousands of seabirds also make the Reserve their home. Hiking trails follow the shoreline and lead to hidden coves. The park has a number of [accessible features](#), including trails, picnic areas, and restrooms.

Managing Agency: California State Parks

Contact/More Information: 62 California 1, Carmel-By-The-Sea, CA 93923; (831) 624-4909; http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=571

Seacliff State Beach

This beach is known for its fishing pier and concrete freighter, SS *Palo Alto*. The ship is unsafe and closed to the public and half of the pier remains closed until needed repairs can be made. The beach is a popular swimming spot. There is a long stretch of sand backed by bluffs. There is covered picnic facilities and a visitor center. The park has a number of [accessible features](#) including a beach wheelchair (call (831) 685-6500 for information), camping sites, trails, parking, and restrooms.

Managing Agency: California State Parks

Contact/More Information: State Park Dr, Aptos, CA 95003; (831) 685-6500;
https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=543

Sunset State Beach

A peaceful campground under the pines, picnicking on the beach, and unmatched views of Monterey Bay make Sunset State Beach a favorite year-round destination. [Accessible features](#) include a beach wheelchair (call (831) 763-7063 for beach wheelchair use information). The website notes that “Getting to Palm Beach requires climbing a 20-foot high sand dune.”

Managing Agency: California State Parks

Contact/More Information: 201 Sunset Beach Rd, Watsonville, CA 95076; (831) 763-7063;
https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=544



*Volunteers and wounded service members and veterans gather for Operation Surf in Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.
Photo: Presidio of Monterey*

Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary

California



A brown pelican comes in for a landing in Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary. Photo: Matt McIntosh/NOAA

Overview

Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary is a globally significant and extraordinarily diverse marine ecosystem that supports abundant wildlife and valuable fisheries. In 2015, the sanctuary expanded north and west of its original boundaries to encompass 3,295 square miles. Today, the sanctuary extends from offshore Half Moon Bay at its southern end, north to just above Point Arena in Mendocino County. Named after San Francisco's Farallon Islands, these sanctuary waters sustain feeding and breeding populations of myriad different forms of marine life. The sanctuary is home to thousands of seals and sea lions, a major white shark population, and the largest concentration of breeding seabirds - over a half-million - in the contiguous United States. Greater Farallones also manages the northern part of Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, from Point Año Nuevo to Marin County. Visitors can enjoy activities such as whale watching, camping, tidepooling, birdwatching, paddling, fishing, and surfing.

General Accessibility

General public access is plentiful, with many coastal sites; most are under state, regional, and local parks management. For a profile of the many places to visit, see our [Get Into Your Sanctuary](#) story map. For a full list of state and county or regional parks, visit

<https://www.parks.ca.gov> or <http://www.calparks.org> websites. You'll want to visit websites for San Mateo, San Francisco, Marin, Sonoma, and Mendocino counties. These can provide accessibility and parking information, maps, directions, safety, and seasonal information on wildlife. For more accessibility details, see "Other Resources," below.

Sonoma/Mendocino Counties: The sanctuary's northern shores boast some of the most ruggedly beautiful scenery to be found anywhere. Along Highway One, from Estero Americano just south of Bodega Bay to Alder Creek near Point Arena, vista after vista unfolds. In the southern end, near Bodega Bay and Jenner, there are a number of accessible beaches and trails. Access elsewhere can be challenging. But some spots, including Bird Walk and Doran Marsh Trail offer some great birdwatching. You can also stroll along a boardwalk in the Bodega Dunes, hike the south trail at Bodega Head, sections of the Kortum Trail, and the entire Vista Trail, and camp, picnic, and borrow beach wheelchairs at several locations along the way. See details at <http://wheelingcalcoast.org/county.php?county=12>

Visitor Centers

Greater Farallones Visitor Center

Come enjoy a stunning view of the Golden Gate Bridge at the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary Visitor Center! Located in a historic Coast Guard station at the mouth of San Francisco Bay, the center offers visitors a wealth of educational resources about wildlife and conservation, as well as access to a sandy beach and green space that's perfect for a sunny day trip. Hours are 10am to 4pm, Wednesday through Sunday.

Call: (415) 561-6622

Address: 991 Marine Dr, San Francisco, CA 94129

Accessibility Features:

- Accessible parking
- Accessible bathrooms/water fountains/other facilities
- Accessible and companion seating
- Accessible exhibits and materials
- Special programs

The sanctuary also has a number of [partner organizations](#), all of whom are accessible, who host exhibits about the sanctuary.

Other Resources

- The sanctuary maintains a [page with visitor resources](#).
- California State Parks maintains a [website](#) of accessible features and amenities.
- Whale and bird watching and sportfishing cruises depart from harbors in San Francisco, Sausalito, Emeryville, and Half Moon Bay. Contact individual operators about naturalist guides and vessel accessibility.

Organizations and Businesses

Environmental Traveling Companions

Environmental Traveling Companions (ETC) is a nonprofit organization that provides opportunities to enjoy the outdoors for all. From their website: “ETC opens the beauty and challenge of the great outdoors to people with disabilities and under-resourced youth. Every year, more than 3,000 people join ETC to raft whitewater rivers, ski alpine meadows, kayak the waters of the Golden Gate and Tomales Bay, and build leadership skills. ETC trips enable participants to access the wilderness and develop an environmental stewardship ethic. Since 1972, ETC has shared outdoor adventures with disadvantaged youth and people of all ages, including those with visual or hearing-impairments, physical or developmental disabilities, and life-threatening illnesses.

To contact, check the links above or:

Call: (415) 474-7662

Address: Fort Mason Center, 2 Marina Blvd. Bldg. C, San Francisco CA 94123

Access Points and Resources

Fort Ross State Historic Park

Historic Fort Ross reflects the Russian culture and architecture typical of this once-thriving 19th century fur trade center and settlements. Accessible features include picnic sites and trails; a beach wheelchair is available. Call (707) 847-3437 for more information.

Managing Agency: California State Parks

Contact/More Information: 19005 Coast Highway One, Jenner, CA 95450; (707) 847-3286; http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=449

Pigeon Point Light State Historic Park

This historic lighthouse stands 115' high – one of the tallest in the U.S. Its beacon guides mariners around the treacherous reef. The Fog Signal Building spotlights shipwrecks and lighthouse keepers, with period artwork, artifacts, and stories. During winter and spring you can watch gray whales migrate close to shore, and may see dolphins playing in the surf. [Accessibility features](#) includes a trail and observation deck. Its visitor center features fully ADA equipped restrooms and other amenities.

Managing Agency: California State Parks

Contact/More Information: 210 Pigeon Point Road, Highway 1, Pescadero, CA 94060; (650) 879-2120; http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=533

Point Reyes National Seashore

From its thunderous ocean breakers crashing against rocky headlands and expansive sand beaches to its open grasslands and forested ridges, Point Reyes offers visitors a tremendous variety of habitats, flora, and fauna. It is best known for its species diversity, its excellent birding (along the Pacific Flyway); the tule elk preserve, and world-famous for land-based whale watching during the nearshore gray whale migration in winter/spring. Home to native cultures

and visited by European explorers, the seashore preserves a tapestry of stories of both cultures. The park has numerous [accessible features](#).

Managing Agency: National Park Service

Contact/More Information: 1 Bear Valley Road, Point Reyes Station, CA 94956; (415) 464-5100; <https://www.nps.gov/pore/index.htm>



A rolling walker with large wheels allows access to enjoy the beach. ©Joan Nova via Flickr under Creative Commons 2.0 License

Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary

California



A white and orange nudibranch rests atop a deepwater reef in Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary. Photo: Greg McFall/NOAA

Overview

Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary is a lush feeding ground for many marine mammals and seabirds. During the spring and early summer, upwelling brings cold, nutrient-rich water towards the surface, causing an explosion of biological activity. Algae and invertebrates thrive in the nutrient-rich water, which attracts a vast array of fish and marine mammals for feeding. Humpback whales, Pacific white-sided dolphins, Dall's porpoises, and California sea lions can be seen throughout the summer and fall. However, few people have seen this special part of the California coast due to its depth, currents, and distance from the mainland.

General Accessibility

The sanctuary is an offshore site requiring a vessel to access the sanctuary. The closest vessel access point to the sanctuary is Spud Point Marina in Bodega Bay.

Visitor Center

Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary does not have its own visitor center. Information about the sanctuary is included in the National Park Service's Bear Valley Visitor Center of Point Reyes National Seashore and the Point Reyes National Seashore Lighthouse Visitor Center as listed below. The [Oakland Museum of California's Natural Sciences gallery](#) has an extensive exhibit about Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary. The museum is accessible and the exhibits have varied levels of accessibility. There are touch screen exploration exhibits, panels, drawers to pull out with specimens, a large video screen with rolling video footage, an oral history experience, and hands-on interactives on ocean plastics.

Bear Valley Visitor Center

The center is the main visitor center in the Point Reyes National Seashore and includes a ranger information station, a NOAA-Science on a Sphere exhibit, and highlights Cordell Bank and Greater Farallones national marine sanctuaries. Whales, tidepools, sandy shores, and seabirds are some of the topics you can explore through dioramas, video, mounted specimens, and wildlife models.

Lighthouse Visitor Center

The Point Reyes National Seashore Lighthouse Visitor Center is at the far end of the park. Within the visitor center, is the ocean exploration center that features the Cordell Bank and Greater Farallones national marine sanctuaries, with painted murals depicting the underwater hidden habitats, live size models, and exhibit panels with sweeping views of the sanctuaries from inside where outside conditions are often windy and cold. In 2018, the park began a massive overhaul of the park side of the visitor center, including improving accessibility on paths, in the visitor center, and on the observation deck; new universally accessible exhibits are also planned if new funding can be found. Expected date of completion is early 2019.

Call: (415) 464-5100

Address: Lighthouse Visitor Center Access Road, Point Reyes Station, CA 94956

Website to get up to date operating hours and information:

<https://www.nps.gov/pore/index.htm>

Accessibility Features:

- Accessible parking
- Accessible bathrooms/water fountains/other facilities
- Accessible and companion seating
- Accessible exhibits and materials
- Special programs

Other Resources

- An online [video gallery](#) on the Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary website helps connect the public to the wonder that lies just offshore.
- [Sonoma Coast State Park](#)

Organizations and Businesses

- The Oakland Museum of California's [Natural Science Gallery](#) has an entire wing focused on the rich and unique Cordell Bank ecosystem.

Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary

Washington



Tufted puffins hang out in a line on rocky shores above the waters of Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary. Photo: Mary Sue Brancato/NOAA

Overview

Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary provides visitors with a spectacular, sparsely populated, and undeveloped shoreline for nearly the entire length of the sanctuary. Forty-eight miles of the sanctuary are adjacent to wilderness beaches of Olympic National Park. The sanctuary protects a productive upwelling zone, providing critical habitat to dozens of species of marine mammals and nearly 100 species of marine birds. Along its shores are thriving kelp and intertidal communities, teeming with fishes and other sea life. Communities of deep sea coral and sponges scatter the dark seafloor and form habitats for fish and other important marine wildlife. In addition, the sanctuary's rich cultural heritage includes the contemporary cultures of four coastal tribes - Makah Tribe, Quileute Tribe, Hoh Tribe, and Quinault Indian Nation - and their long-standing relationship to the ocean. Visitors can experience a wide variety of activities ranging from cultural enrichment to ecosystem exploration.

General Accessibility

The sanctuary shoreline measures approximately 135 miles and runs along most of the Washington coast, from north of Copalis Beach up to and around Cape Flattery. Much of the coastline is wilderness beach with few amenities, including accessibility features.

Visitor Center

Olympic Coast Discovery Center

No trip to Washington state's beautiful and remote Olympic Coast is complete without first stopping by NOAA's Olympic Coast Discovery Center in Port Angeles, Washington! Plan your hikes or sightseeing trips along the coast, discover local marine life, and learn about the sanctuary's rich history.

Call: 360-406-2092

Address: The Landing Mall, 115 East Railroad, Suite #208 Port Angeles, WA, 98362
USA

Accessibility Features:

- Accessible parking
- Accessible bathrooms/water fountains/other facilities
- Accessible and companion seating
- Accessible exhibits and materials
- Special programs

Other Resources

- The sanctuary maintains a page with [resources for visitors](#).
- The sanctuary offers a [virtual dive gallery](#) at Olympic Coast Discovery Center and online.
- For sanctuary information, and NOAA weather and tides forecasts, Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary kiosks are located at Pacific Science Center in Seattle, Washington, Forks Visitor Center in Forks, Washington, and Kalaloch Lodge in Olympic National Park.
- Washington state maintains a list of accessible [public fishing piers](#) and [water access sites](#) (please note these are to inland bodies of water, not the ocean).

Access Points and Resources

Olympic National Park

At Olympic National Park, forest, coastal, and mountain ecosystems combine to create a spectacular wilderness park. Designated as both a World Heritage Site and an International Biosphere Reserve by the United Nations, the park serves as a living laboratory for scientists and students, as well as an incredible natural playground for visitors. Millions of people visit Olympic each year to experience its beauty, diversity, and many opportunities for adventure, exploration, and recreation. The park has numerous [accessible features](#), depending on locations, including trails, restroom, and visitor centers.

Managing Agency: National Park Service

Contact/More Information: 3002 Mount Angeles Road (Visitor Center), Port Angeles, WA 98362; (360) 565-3130; <https://www.nps.gov/olym/planyourvisit/>



A service dog joins his kid in the surf at the beach. @Canines for Disabled Kids

PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary

Hawai'i



A humpback whale swims with her calf in Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary. Image: Ed Lyman/NOAA

Overview

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary is a vital component of the protection of the humpback whale population, as it's the only place in the U.S. where humpback whales reproduce. Scientists estimate that two-thirds (approximately 10,000 whales) of the entire North Pacific humpback whale population migrate to Hawaiian waters to breed, calve, and nurse their young. No one knows exactly when humpback whales first began wintering in the warm, shallow waters around the Hawaiian Islands. Narrative reports from whalers document the appearance of these majestic giants in Hawai'i in the 1840s, but little evidence substantiates an earlier presence. In addition to the magnificent whale watching opportunities, the sanctuary also provides opportunities for surfing, diving, and snorkeling.

General Accessibility

The sanctuary is a multi-component park with coastal segments extending offshore to the 100-fathom isobath around sections of the main islands: part of Kaua‘i’s north shore; part of O‘ahu’s north shore around Kahuku point and part of its southeast shore from Makapu‘u Point to Diamond Head; part of the west and south shores of Moloka‘i; the entire circumference of Lāna‘i; part of Maui’s western shore; and part of the northwest shore of the big island of Hawai‘i. While Hawai‘i has generous public beach access across most of the islands, the access points below will lead you into the sanctuary.

Visitor Center

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale Visitor Center

Located in Kīhei on the south shore of Maui, the visitor center is an ideal spot to learn about the marine environment and even see humpback whales breaching. This scenic beachfront location at the foot of Haleakalā has views of Kaho‘olawe, Lāna‘i, and West Maui looking across the waters of the sanctuary. Recently renovated, the visitor center currently showcases several exhibits including an interactive touch screen monitor, turtle puzzles and games for kids, and a showcase of the tools used in whale disentanglement operations, with even more exhibits being planned for the future. There are interpretive signs around the lanai to highlight stories of the historic Hawaiian fishpond, the scenic view, and conservation messages related to the surrounding environment. Inside, the exhibits tell the story of marine animals and coral reefs that are found throughout Hawai‘i. Intertwined are displays on how native Hawaiians lived in concert with the land and sea.

Call: (808) 879-2818

Address: 726 S Kihei Rd, Kihei, HI 96753

Accessibility Features:

- Accessible parking
- Accessible bathrooms/water fountains/other facilities
- Accessible and companion seating
- Accessible exhibits and materials
- Special programs

Other Resources

- The sanctuary offers visitors a [resource page](#).
- The county of Honolulu maintains a [list](#) of beach wheelchair access resources for its parks.
- The Hawaiian Tourism Authority maintains a [website](#) with generic accessibility information and resources for the islands.

Organizations and Businesses

- [AccesSurf](#) works to advance opportunities in adaptive water sports, ocean recreation, and therapeutic instruction for people with disabilities through events such as days at the beach and adaptive surfing competitions. Contact: PO Box 15152 Honolulu, HI 96830; 1.808.236.4200; Info@AccesSurf.org

Access Points and Resources

Oahu

Hanauma Bay State Park

Hanauma Bay was declared a protected marine life conservation area and underwater park in 1967. Formed within a volcanic cone, today Hanauma Bay offers a pristine marine ecosystem after the city and county of Honolulu laid out a plan in 1990 to restore the “curved bay,” after years of use from the millions of visitors who visit and love to snorkel Hanauma Bay. Voted the Best Beach in the United States for 2016, the volunteers have a booth located on the beach level to help visitors learn about conservation of the reef and the types of fish that live there. In 2002 a marine education center was opened for visitors, and part of the conservation plan requires first-time visitors to watch a 9 minute video before entering the park so they can learn about the marine life, preservation, and safety rules for the park. All visitors are required by law to refrain from mistreating the marine animals and from touching or walking on the coral. [All-terrain wheelchairs](#) are available from the Beach Information Kiosk, for two hours on a first come first served basis.

Managing Agency: Hawai‘i State Parks

Contact/More Information: 7455 Kalanianaʻole Hwy, Honolulu; (808) 396-4229 (24 Hour Information Hotline); <https://hanaumabaystatepark.com/>

Waimea Bay Beach Park

Located on the legendary North Shore, Waimea Bay was an influential surf spot during the dawn of big wave surfing in the 1950s. Adventurous surfers began to challenge the powerful winter waves of Waimea (as well as Makaha Beach on the west side) giving birth to the big wave-riding phenomenon. Beyond the surf, Waimea Bay is a beautiful North Shore Beach with wide stretches of sand to sunbathe and picnic. During the summer, the waves of Waimea actually subside making the waters suitable for swimming. The park provides a [beach access map](#) to a viewing point; a beach wheelchair is not available.

Managing Agency: County of Honolulu

Contact/More Information: 61-031 Kamehameha Highway, Honolulu; (808) 768-3003 (Honolulu County Department of Parks and Recreation); parks@honolulu.gov (Honolulu County Department of Parks and Recreation);

<https://www.gohawaii.com/islands/oahu/regions/north-shore/waimea-bay>

Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument

Hawai'i



Visitors enjoy a lecture at the Mokuāpapa Discovery Center. Photo: Andy Collins/NOAA

Overview

The monument is one of the largest conservation areas in the world, protecting over 580,000 square miles of Pacific Ocean. The extensive coral reefs found in Papahānaumokuākea – truly the rainforests of the sea – are home to over 7,000 marine species, one-quarter of which is found only in the Hawaiian Archipelago. Many of the islands and shallow-water environments are important habitats for rare species such as the threatened green turtle and the endangered Hawaiian monk seal. On less than six square miles of land, over 14 million seabirds representing 23 species breed and nest. Land areas also provide a home for four species of bird found nowhere else in the world, including the world's most endangered duck, the Laysan duck.

General Accessibility

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and surrounding waters that make up the monument (and overlaps with Midway Atoll and Hawaiian Islands national wildlife refuges) are inaccessible to

the public, both by their remote location and by management measures designed to protect these important areas.

Visitor Center

Mokupāpapa Discovery Center

In 2003, the Mokupāpapa Discovery Center was established to interpret the natural science, culture, and history of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and surrounding marine environment. Since most people will never have the opportunity to visit these remote islands, our facility on the bayfront in Hilo, Hawai‘i serves to "bring the place to the people" and spur greater public awareness of the region and ocean conservation issues. Housed in Hilo’s historic, century old Koehnen Building, Mokupāpapa features a 3,500 gallon saltwater aquarium, interactive educational exhibits, lifesize models of wildlife found in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, artwork inspired by those islands and Hawaiian culture, and many interpretive panels in both Hawaiian and English. The beauty of the historic Koehnen building has been preserved and refreshed to show off its majesty, including a koa wood staircase, Hawaiian hardwood floors, and high ceilings. In our new facility, the nature and culture of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands come alive as never before, transporting visitors to this remote ocean wilderness where predators rule the reefs, the skies teem with swooping, screeching seabirds, and the Native Hawaiian chanting of the Kumulipo (a Hawaiian creation chant) sets the mood for exploration and learning.

Call: (808) 933-8180

Address: 76 Kamehameha Avenue, Hilo, Hawai‘i 96720

Accessibility Features:

- Accessible parking
- Accessible bathrooms/water fountains/other facilities
- Accessible and companion seating
- Accessible exhibits and materials
- Public elevator for second floor access
- Special programs

Other Resources

- The monument maintains [virtual visits](#) on their website through Google Streetview.
- The county of Honolulu maintains a [list](#) of beach wheelchair access resources for its parks.
- The Hawaiian Tourism Authority maintains a [website](#) with generic accessibility information and resources for the islands.

National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa/ Rose Atoll Marine National Monument

American Samoa



Fish school over the reefs of reefs included in National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa. Photo: Wendy Cover/NOAA

Overview

National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa supports one of the most diverse ecosystems in the National Marine Sanctuary System. Some of the marine life that finds a home in the sanctuary includes invertebrates, fishes, turtles, marine mammals, and marine plants. The sanctuary protects extensive coral reefs, including some of the oldest and largest *Porites* coral heads in the world, along with deep water reefs, hydrothermal vent communities, and rare marine archaeological resources. Located in the remote islands of Polynesia, it is also the only true tropical reef within the system. It encompasses 13,581 square miles around the culture-rich islands of American Samoa.

General Accessibility

The sanctuary is composed of a number of coastal and offshore components. The coastal components include Fagatele Bay and Fogama'a and Fagalua Coves on the southern end of Tutuila; part of the western and southern coasts of T'au; and parts of the southern and eastern shores of Aunu'u. There are at present no known wheelchair accessible beaches providing access to the sanctuary.

Visitor Center

Tauese P.F. Sunia Ocean Center

The Tauese P.F. Sunia Ocean Center provides visitors with a window into the culture, history, and natural environment of American Samoa. This state-of-the-art facility is popular among local residents and tourists alike, offering educational programs and high-tech learning tools like "Science on a Sphere," an interactive, fully spherical video screen.

Call: (684) 633-6500

Address: Rte 1, Utulei, Eastern 96799 American Samoa

Other Resources

- The sanctuary maintains a number of [virtual dives](#) on its website.



AMERICA'S UNDERWATER TREASURES