

**Canaveral  
National  
Seashore**



## Canaveral National Seashore

One of the few wilderness areas remaining on Florida's Atlantic Coast is protected by its inclusion within the boundaries of the Canaveral National Seashore.

How do you describe a national treasure, a storehouse of natural wonders in an increasingly artificial world?

This is a gentle but untamed land. Its 25 miles of clean, white beaches are backed by high, lushly vegetated barrier dunes. To the east, the Seashore is washed by the waters of the Atlantic Ocean. To the west, behind marsh, tree-covered hammocks and stands of mangrove taking shelter in the lee of the dunes, is a productive subtropical estuary — Mosquito Lagoon.

The island-dotted lagoon is shallow (one to eight feet) and is subject to ocean tides through Ponce de Leon Inlet at New Smyrna Beach. Unlike many of Florida's coastal bays, Mosquito Lagoon is untouched by development, its grassy bottom a crucial nursery for many species of fish, molluscs and shrimp.

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### Access

Located midway down the Florida east coast between Jacksonville and West Palm Beach, the Seashore is readily accessible via such major arterials as U.S. Route 1 and Interstate Routes I-95, I-4 and I-75. New Smyrna Beach, the Gateway City to the north, provides access via Florida A1A into the Seashore in the vicinity of Turtle Mound, a shell midden created by pre-Hispanic Indians. Titusville, the southern Gateway City,

provides access via Florida Route 402.

Playalinda Beach on the Seashore's southern rim — within easy viewing distance of NASA rocket installations — is now the principal visitor use area. It is accessible via Florida 402 from Titusville and

Florida 3, which cuts off to the south from U.S. Route 1 between Titusville and Oak Hill.

In addition, the Intra-coastal Waterway linking Florida with the north skirts the western edge of Mosquito Lagoon before entering the Indian River via the Haulover Canal.

### History

The earliest inhabitants were aboriginal Indians who frequented the area from before the time of Christ. Evidence of their

presence may be found along the margins of Mosquito Lagoon in the form of burial mounds and shell middens. These Indians apparently enjoyed a diet consisting largely of oysters and other forms of seafood. Ponce de Leon anchored off Cape Canav-

eral in 1513. The first foreign visitor to set foot on the land was the Spaniard Albero Maxia, a member of the St. Augustine garrison who scouted the region in 1605.

### Geology

The region is also of geological interest. The beach is a retrograding one, with its sands gradually migrating landward due to overwash during severe storms. Mosquito Lagoon has been pierced by a number of ocean inlets over

the centuries, the most recent, near Turtle Mound, closing approximately 1500 years ago.

### Wildlife

The Seashore is home to a wide variety of wildlife, including a number of rare or endangered species. The beaches serve as nesting sites for giant loggerhead and green turtles in the early summer. A number of bald eagles winter in the Seashore, nesting in tall pine trees. Ponderous manatees or sea cows are frequently spotted in the lagoon and the region is "home" to several hundred American Alligators. Over 284 species of birds have been observed within the Seashore and the adjacent Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. A large nesting population of brown pelicans occupies a mangrove rookery island in the heart of the Seashore. These same birds are frequently observed along the ocean beach. The tidal zone is a haven for many shorebirds feeding on small forms of marine life living in or near the surf. Snakes, some poisonous, live in the thick underbrush where they feed on small rodents.



### Fishing

Surf fishing is productive for scrappy bluefish and Spanish mackerel, whiting, pompano and other varieties of sport fish. Fishing in the lagoon produces sea trout (spotted weakfish), redfish (sea bass), snook and many other species. The lagoon is especially productive of both black and silver mullet, vegetarian fish taken by cast net.

### Visitors Activities

Playalinda Beach is the principal visitor use area. Five miles of ocean beach with adjacent vehicle parking permits the visitor to enjoy swimming, surfing, sun bathing, shell collecting and surf fishing. Bird watching, wildlife observation, photography, wildland hiking and boating are favorite activities inland from the barrier beach. Although camping facilities are not available within the park, private campgrounds are located in nearby communities.

### Regulations

Plants and animals are protected. Vehicles are restricted to established roadways and are not permitted on the beach. Archaeological sites are not to be disturbed. All weapons are prohibited, except as permitted by waterfowl hunting regulations. Metal detectors are not allowed in the park.

### General Hints

The climate is subtropical, with short, mild winters and hot, humid summers. Ocean temperatures remain relatively warm all year. The name



"Mosquito Lagoon" is not whimsical and visitors to inland areas away from the influence of offshore breezes should carry a repellent to protect themselves from mosquitoes and other biting insects.

Due to strong ocean currents, swimming can be dangerous. For your safety, swim in protected areas. Fishing and waterfowl hunting are permitted in designated areas in accordance with state and federal regulations. Park Rangers are available to provide assistance or to answer questions.

### Administration

Canaveral National Seashore is co-managed by the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior. The Superintendent in immediate charge of the area maintains a temporary office on State Route 402 seven miles east of Titusville. The address is P.O. Box 2583, Titusville, FL 32780. Phone (305) 867-4675.



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