



Backcountry Beach Camping on Santa Rosa Island

Backcountry beach camping is available mid August through December along Santa Rosa Island's extensive, beautiful, and undeveloped 55-mile coastline. This coastline is reminiscent of a California in days gone by. The rocky coast and sandy beaches are much the same as the ones the Chumash Indians, Spanish explorers, and early ranchers may have known. This remote, fragile environment is critical for sea and shorebirds, marine mammals, and plant communities.

In 1992, the National Park Service opened the island to backcountry beach camping in recognition of its rare wilderness values. As you explore these wild areas by kayak or on foot, please take responsibility to help us protect and preserve these delicate natural resources for future generations. The following information will help you enjoy your visit while leaving the smallest impact on the island.

WARNING: *While backcountry camping is an incredible experience, it is not for the inexperienced backpacker or kayaker. Due to difficult weather, rugged terrain, and off-trail hiking, backcountry camping is an arduous endeavor and should be undertaken only by experienced, well-conditioned backpackers and kayakers.*

Open and Closed Dates

January 1 - August 14

Backcountry beachcamping is closed to protect pupping seals/sea lions and nesting seabirds.

August 15 - September 15

Only East Point to South Point Beaches (Southeast Quadrant) are open to backcountry camping for boaters, kayakers, and backpackers.

September 16 - December 31

All beaches are open to backcountry camping except those around Sandy Point and those between Carrington Point and East Point.

Destination and Distances

The park boat concessionaire, Island Packers, usually drops off and picks up kayakers and backpackers at the pier near the ranch area in Bechers Bay. Channel Islands Aviation drops hikers at the end of the airstrip near Water Canyon, approximately one mile from the pier and a 1/2 mile from the frontcountry campground in Water Canyon.

Hiking is along the beach, dirt roads, or unmaintained paths created by island animals. ***These roads and paths are rugged and mountainous with no signs.*** All distances that follow are approximate and measured from the pier, unless stated. Please refer to topographical maps for more accurate mileage and to help with the following descriptions. It is recommended that all backpackers purchase topographic maps (USGS 7.5 minute maps or the Trails Illustrated map of all the islands) and kayakers purchase nautical charts before departing on their journey.

Although the closest beach that is open to camping between August 15 and September 15 is just south of East Point (approximately seven hiking miles and eight kayaking miles from the pier), it is not recommended for camping. This beach is a small pocket beach and often washed out at higher tides. In addition, pounding surf and strong winds constantly reshape this beach.

If hiking beyond East Point to Ford Point, it is recommended that you follow the ridge line or road until you reach the northeast ridge of San Augustine Canyon. Follow this ridge down to the mouth of the canyon. Hiking along the beach from East Point to Ford Point is impossible due to sections of vertical cliffs that drop directly into the ocean. However, kayakers can access beaches throughout this area. Once hikers reach Ford Point, they may follow the low terrace or higher ridge

(both eventually run into a coastal road) down to the Johnsons Lee area. Refer to topographical maps for more details.

Direct access to beaches between Johnsons Lee and Ford Point (including La Jolla Vieja) is also possible via the Main/Soledad or South/Wreck roads. Both of these routes are long hikes (see mileage chart to the right) with a considerable amount of climbing and, once again, like all hiking or kayaking on the island, is recommended only for the experienced, well-conditioned traveler.

Beginning September 16, the closest beach camping is Cow Canyon (approximately five hiking miles or seven kayaking miles from the pier). Nearby Lobo Canyon beach is closed to beach camping and only available for day use.

Hiking Distances

Destination (from pier unless stated)	Approximate distance in miles	
	Hiking	Kayaking
Ford Point via south road	9	--
East Point	7	8
East Point to Ford Point	8	5
Ford Point to Johnsons Lee	4	3.5
Johnsons Lee (via East Point)	18	16
Johnsons Lee via main road	14	--
Johnsons Lee via south road	13.5	--
La Jolla Vieja via south road	11.2	--
Cow Canyon	5	7

Weather

Backpackers and kayakers should be prepared for strong northwest winds throughout the year, with the possibility of strong east or Santa Ana winds from October through January. The average wind speed is 15 knots, although speeds of 40 to 50 knots are not uncommon. Occasionally, the south side of the island (South Point to East Point) offers protection from these strong winds.

Dense fog is common during the summer months, but may occur at any time, making chart and compass navigation mandatory. Weather conditions are generally best from August through October, with relatively calm wind and sea conditions and virtually no rain. Ocean water temperatures range from the lower 50s (°F) in the winter to the upper 60s (°F) in the fall.

Kayakers may encounter strong ocean currents around the islands. Intense wave and surf conditions exist around the Carrington Point area. Sheer cliffs rise out of the ocean, reflecting incoming waves back out to sea, creating a washing machine effect. In this turbulent area there are no places to land, even in an emergency. The first landable beach is Lobo Canyon, six miles west of the ranch area pier. Rounding Skunk Point may be tricky as well because of merging currents. The wind often increases in the afternoon, and the prevailing northwesterlies can make paddling back to Water Canyon difficult. During the summer months, large swells often pound the south side of the island, making landing and launching from the beaches extremely challenging, requiring advanced skills.

Water

One gallon of water per person per day is recommended. Water weighs approximately 8 pounds per gallon. Potable water is available in the Water Canyon campground.

During the backcountry camping season (mid-August through December), the only location outside the Water Canyon campground with an accessible, guaranteed water source is Clapp Spring, approximately 7 miles from the pier. The water at Clapp Spring is safe to drink when boiled, filtered, or treated with iodine.

Although nine canyons may carry some degree of water throughout the year (except during dry years), water is not always available at the mouth of the canyons near the beach and can be dirty. These nine canyons include: Water, Old Ranch House (intermittent), San Augustine, Wreck, Jolla Vieja, Arlington, Soledad, Cow (Intermittent), and Lobo (Intermittent). Since the water in the streams can be contaminated with coliform bacteria and giardia, it is recommended that you boil, filter, and/or add iodine to the water.

Regulations and Guidelines

The protection and preservation of your park's biological and cultural resources is the mission of the National Park Service. By following the regulations and guidelines in "Limiting Your Impact", you can help protect these rare and unique treasures for future generations to enjoy. For a more complete description of "Leave No Trace" principles, visit <http://www.lnt.org/>.

Regulations:

- Check with a ranger on arrival for an on-site orientation.
- Camping is prohibited year-round at Lobo Canyon and between Carrington and East Point (except in the Water Canyon campground).
- From **January 1 - August 14**, backcountry beach camping is closed to protect pupping seals/sea lions and nesting seabirds.
- From March 1 to September 15, the back beaches and sand dunes between and including Skunk Point to just north of East Point are closed to hiking to protect the nesting area for the snowy plover, a federally listed, threatened shorebird. Please remain on the wet sand (below mean high tide) or the road throughout this area.
- The beaches around Sandy Point are closed to all access year-round.
- It is prohibited by law and regulation to leave human solid waste in the backcountry or in the wet intertidal sand. Human waste and toilet paper

must be packed out for proper disposal. A variety of commercial "waste bags" are available at the following websites: www.biffybag.com, www.rei.com/product/692303.

- Camping is only allowed on beaches. Camping is prohibited in any other areas, including coastal bluffs.
- No fires are allowed.
- Since the mice do carry hantavirus, some basic precautions should be taken: do not feed any wild animals; keep food and drink in rodent-proof containers; and prevent entry of mice into your tent by keeping it zipped up at all times.
- Pack out all trash.

Guidelines:

- Utilize sandy areas that are free of dune vegetation when hiking, landing water craft, and camping. Keep tents, kitchen areas, and traffic in "hardened" areas that are already bare from previous use.
- Strain or separate food particles from cooking water and pack them out. Scatter the gray water 200 ft. from water sources and camps.
- Minimize soap use to keep the backcountry free of chemicals. If washing with soap, rinse 200 ft. from water sources.
- Do not damage live trees, plants, and other living things. It is not permitted to chop or nail trees, harvest or trample plants.

Reservations

Backcountry campers must first secure boat transportation to Santa Rosa Island through the park's boat concessionaires or by their own private vessel. Camping reservations are required in advance for beach camping and can be made by calling (877) 444-6777 or by visiting recreation.gov. Please specify "Santa Rosa

Island Backcountry Beachcamping" when reserving sites. Separate camping reservations are needed for the established campground at Water Canyon and must be obtained in advance by calling (877) 444-6777 or through recreation.gov

MAP IS NOT FOR NAVIGATION: This map is for reference only. Use a topographic map for navigation.

