

Isle Royale

NATIONAL PARK • MICHIGAN

A wilderness archipelago in Lake Superior, a roadless land of wild creatures, unspoiled forests, lakes, and scenic shores, accessible only by boat or floatplane—this is Isle Royale National Park. Here you are close to nature, whether camping, hiking, fishing, canoeing, or studying by sight or by camera the flowers and trees, the mammals, birds, and insects.

MAN ON ISLE ROYALE

Long before Europeans saw Isle Royale, Indians mined copper here. Using hand-held beach cobbles, they hammered out chunks of pure copper from the hard bedrock. Archeologists have excavated their shallow mining pits, some of which date as far back as 4,500 years. When the French took possession of the island in 1671, they found Indians living here who did not remember the copper miners of old. It was the French, lured to the island by the fur trade, who named it Isle Royale.

In 1783, Isle Royale became part of the United States, though it was recognized as Chippewa territory until 1843, when the tribe ceded it to the United States. Prospectors swarmed over the island and burned large acreages of forest to expose copper outcroppings and to clear space for mining settlements. Lumbering for local needs also flourished.

Mining continued until 1899, and the ruins of many of these activities are still evident. The amount of copper on the island had been adequate for the crude tools of ancient Indians but was insufficient for commercial mining.

In the early 1900's when Isle Royale became popular for summer homes and excursion boat tours, many visitors realized the island's value as a wilderness retreat. The movement to preserve it, spearheaded by Albert Stoll, Jr., a Detroit newspaperman, resulted in the establishment of the national park on April 3, 1940.

PLANTS AND ANIMALS

Forests dominate the scenery and the ecology of the park. Evergreens and hardwoods meet on Isle Royale and form an outstanding example of forest transition. The interior and upland regions of the park have pure hardwood stands, whereas the cool, moist shores and lake borders tend to have mixed evergreen forests. Despite the short summer growing season, Isle Royale has several hundred species of wildflowers.

Isle Royale is 15 miles from the nearest mainland shore and the only animals that live here today are those that could fly, swim, drift across the water barrier, or cross the ice that occasionally forms a bridge to Canada.

More than 200 kinds of birds have been listed. The red squirrel is the most frequently observed small mammal. Other common mammals include the beaver, red fox, snowshoe hare, and moose. Moose are found throughout the park, and are often seen wading in the shallow inland lakes. They were not on the island before 1900, but soon thereafter a number of them either swam or ventured over the ice from Canada and have since flourished. Wolves, rarely observed by people, prey upon the moose, culling the herds and keeping the population down to levels the island can support.

GEOLOGY OF THE ISLAND

Isle Royale is the creation of volcanoes, ice, and water. Its billion-year-old rocks are basalt lava flows layered with river-deposited sandstone and conglomerate. Originally horizontal, these rock beds were bent downward long ago to form the great basin now occupied by Lake Superior. Isle Royale is on the northwest rim of this basin.

Within the last 3 million years, numerous glaciers have covered Isle Royale, ground smooth the surfaces of its rocks, gouged out basins that are now lakes, and exposed layers of the softer sandstone and conglomerate. Water has eroded these soft rock strata into valleys that now extend the full length of the island. Between these valleys, the rock beds of hard basalt form long ridges, such as massive Greenstone Ridge, backbone of the island.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Interpretive program. To help you enjoy this natural area, park rangers conduct nature walks and evening slide programs. The schedule is posted at campgrounds and ranger stations. Self-guiding nature trails with interpretive signs and exhibits are further aids to your understanding of this park.

Publications about the park's history and natural history, as well as maps of the trail system and waterways, are sold at the park. For a pricelist, write to the Isle Royale Natural History Association, Isle Royale National Park, Houghton, MI 49931.

Season. Isle Royale National Park is open to visitors from about May 15 to October 20. Mid-summer temperatures rarely exceed 80°; evenings are usually cool. Rain, frequent throughout the season, provides moisture for the lush north woods and the lakes and streams that make Isle Royale the kind of park it is.

Accommodations. Lodge and housekeeping facilities are available from late June to Labor Day. For reservations and rates during the season, write to Rock Harbor Lodge, Houghton, MI 49931, or Windigo Inn, Isle Royale, via Grand Portage, MN 55605; out of season, write to National Park Concessions, Inc., Mammoth Cave, KY 42259.

Transportation to the park. Transportation from the mainland to Isle Royale is by boat or floatplane. Reservations are recommended.

Houghton to Rock Harbor (May to October). For schedules, rates, and reservations for the NPS boat RANGER III, write to the Superintendent, Isle Royale National Park, Houghton, MI 49931.

Because the waters of Lake Superior are often rough, it is not safe to use boats of 20 feet or less to go to the island. However, such boats can be transported to Isle Royale on the RANGER III. The private boat operators mentioned below will transport small runabouts and canoes. Gasoline for your boat cannot be carried on commercial boats or planes but may be purchased at Rock Harbor and Windigo.

Copper Harbor to Rock Harbor (late June to Labor Day). Also pre- and post-season chartered trips. Write to Isle Royale Queen II, Copper Harbor, MI 49918.

Grand Portage to Windigo (late June to Labor Day) and **Grand Portage to Rock Harbor via Windigo** (May to October). Write to Sivertson Brothers, 366 Lake Avenue South, Duluth, MN 55802. One boat circumnavigates Isle Royale and will discharge and pick up passengers at various points.

Houghton to Windigo via Rock Harbor (late June to Labor Day). Write to Isle Royale Seaplane Service, Box 371, Houghton, MI 49931.

All camping parties and those traveling in their own boats are required, upon arrival, to register at an information or ranger station.

Firearms are prohibited in the park.

Pets. Dogs (except for guide dogs), cats, and other pets are prohibited within the park.

Communications. Rock Harbor has postal service from mid-June through Labor Day; mail is delivered two or three times weekly. Address: Rock Harbor Lodge, Isle Royale National Park, MI 55617. Rock Harbor Lodge and Windigo Inn have emergency telegraph service. Incoming telegrams should be addressed to the terminal point desired, care of National Park Concessions, Inc., 87 North Ripley Street, Houghton, MI 49931.

Medical services. Professional medical services are not available at the park. Seriously ill or injured persons must be transported to the mainland. All campers, boaters, and hikers should carry a first-aid kit.

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Park seasons and schedules vary from year to year at Isle Royale. Contact the park for current information prior to your visit.

