

# ASSATEAGUE ISLAND







This barrier island has many moods . . . the serenity of a placid summer evening, quiet save for the soothing wash of advancing and retreating waves . . . a raging winter storm with thundering surf assaulting one's ears . . . on a summer day, the cries of terns mingled with the shouts of playing children.

The alinement and topography of Assateague's seaward side are constantly changing; the island was born of the sea and the wind is ever sensitive to the seige of the elements. The dunes—built up of grains of sand carried and deposited by ocean currents, cast up by the surf, and blown above high-tide mark by the winds—form a barrier protecting the low-lying mass of the island from violent storms. The dunes themselves are fragile and unstable, anchored by grasses that are tolerant of salt-spray but vulnerable to human feet—protection of these grasses is thus a key to preservation of the island ecology.

Beyond the dunes, pines and shrubs have taken a firm hold in the sandy base to create a substantial plant cover. Here dwell deer, foxes, raccoons, and birds usually associated with mainland forests and meadows. In the bayside waters, oysters, clams, and crabs in abundance are a source of food and income for inhabitants of the nearby mainland. These waters are important, too, as a nursery for marine fishes, both sport and commercial.

It is chiefly the island's magnificent, 35-mile-long beach that draws tens of thousands of visitors each year. The gently sloping bottom, the fine surf and lack of strong undertow, moderate water temperatures, sea-tempered climate, and easy access make Assateague a mecca for vacationers. (One often finds more surf fisherman than surf bathers on the beach.)



Assateague Island is less than 100 miles from Norfolk, Va., via the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-tunnel, 150 miles from Baltimore, and 165 from Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia.

**Island Management** The National Seashore boundaries enclose the waters within several hundred yards of Assateague Island. Through the creation of this boundary, other State and Federal land-management holdings were surrounded by a recreation zone. The road to the National Seashore from Chincoteague, Va., enters and traverses part of Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, which is administered by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, U.S. Department of the Interior. The refuge occupies most of the Virginia portion of the island. As part of the National Seashore it will retain its prime character as one of the sanctuaries for waterfowl on the Atlantic Flyway, the migration route that stretches from the Arctic to the Caribbean. The refuge contains the highest ground on the island, with pine and oak woods, freshwater ponds, and bordering salt marshes. There is good feeding here for waterfowl. In autumn and early spring, the ponds and marshes are heavily populated with migrating ducks and geese. The greater snow goose arrives about the beginning of November; the sight of a flight in V-formation of these big white birds with distinctive black wingtips is a memorable experience. In addition to the waterfowl, there are some 30 to 40 species of shore birds visiting or breeding on Assateague.

The National Park Service manages the recreation within that portion of the refuge known as "the hook," which curls around Tom's Cove.

At the entrance to the seashore in Maryland is 688-acre Assateague State Park, which retains its identity as a separate management unit within the total seashore boundaries.



**Unusual Residents** The most widely known four-footed inhabitants of Assateague are its wild ponies. No one knows where the forebears of these appealing little horses came from, though it is legendary that they were survivors of the wreck of a Spanish galleon.

At any rate, they are now as popular with visitors as are the bears of Yellowstone National Park. Their ordinary diet is marsh grass and bayberry leaves. For some years the Virginia herd has been managed by the Chincoteague Fire Department, which holds an annual roundup or "pony penning" during the last week in July.

The Maryland herd will be managed by the National Park Service.

Sika deer, native to Japan, have also become established on Assateague. Smaller than the Virginia white-tailed deer of Eastern North America, they have flourished under the adverse conditions on the island, and can often be seen in the many small, marshy meadows.

**Development** Public-use development of Assateague Island National Seashore lies largely in the future. The National Park Service has a land-acquisition program involving more than 3,500 owners of property on the island. Within the next few years this program will be completed and there will be facilities to take care of several million visitors annually. Long-range plans call for a careful balance between conservation of the natural beauty of the island and maximum possible recreational enjoyment.

The future has already been tentatively mapped. Maryland has begun development of visitor facilities within its area.

South of Assateague State Park, private business will operate a concession area, with overnight accommodations, food services, and recreational facilities.





The northern end of the island will be left in its natural state. It will be reached by foot and boat only and will be reserved for beachcombers and fishermen.

Only drinking water, sanitary facilities, and bayside boat docks are planned.

A road is planned to connect the Maryland bridge with the Virginia Bridge; it will pass several developed areas, which will probably be near the shore in the vicinity of Little Egging Beach, Fox Levels, and Popes Island. These areas will provide parking, bathhouses, beach access, comfort stations, water, picnic facilities, and campgrounds. There will be a marina for visitors crossing the bay by boat. As you follow self-guiding trails with markers explaining the plant and animal life of the area or stroll on the clean, sun-washed sand, you will discover nature undisturbed; and you will find a respite from the noisy world that exists on the nearby mainland.

**About Your Visit** At present, there is no road on Assateague Island connecting the Maryland and Virginia sections, although there is a bridge near each end of the island. To reach the Virginia section, use U.S. 13 and Va. 175. To reach the Maryland section, use U.S. 13, then U.S. 50 or 113 and Md. 376 or 611.

**Use of Available Facilities** Because the National Seashore was only recently authorized by Congress, there are still only limited National Park Service facilities (at each end of the island). *Much of the land is still in private ownership—visitors are reminded to respect the rights of landowners.*

Because of the delicate nature of this sandy environment, beach vehicles are required to *stay on designated routes and cross the barrier dune only at designated locations.*



**Maryland.** At headquarters on the mainland side of the Sinepuxent Bridge is an information center, where visitors are offered an introduction to the area.

Assateague State Park occupies a 2-mile section of the island at the Maryland entrance.

Here are parking spaces, campsites, water, bathhouses, protected beaches, and food services. State park regulations prohibit the presence of pets.

The National Park Service has a limited day-use area immediately south of the State Park, offering seasonal lifeguard protection and sanitary facilities.

Many private campgrounds within a few minutes drive of the island are readily apparent to those seeking this type of accommodation, and Ocean City is just 6 miles away.

**Virginia.** Partially within Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, the National Park Service operates a 5-mile-long day-use area containing a food concession, a bathhouse, and protected beaches. A nature trail is operated by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. This area has no campground; in the city of Chincoteague, 2 miles from the seashore property, are privately operated campgrounds, as well as motels, restaurants, stores, and rental boats.

Visitors can obtain further information at an information center on the approach road from the city of Chincoteague.



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



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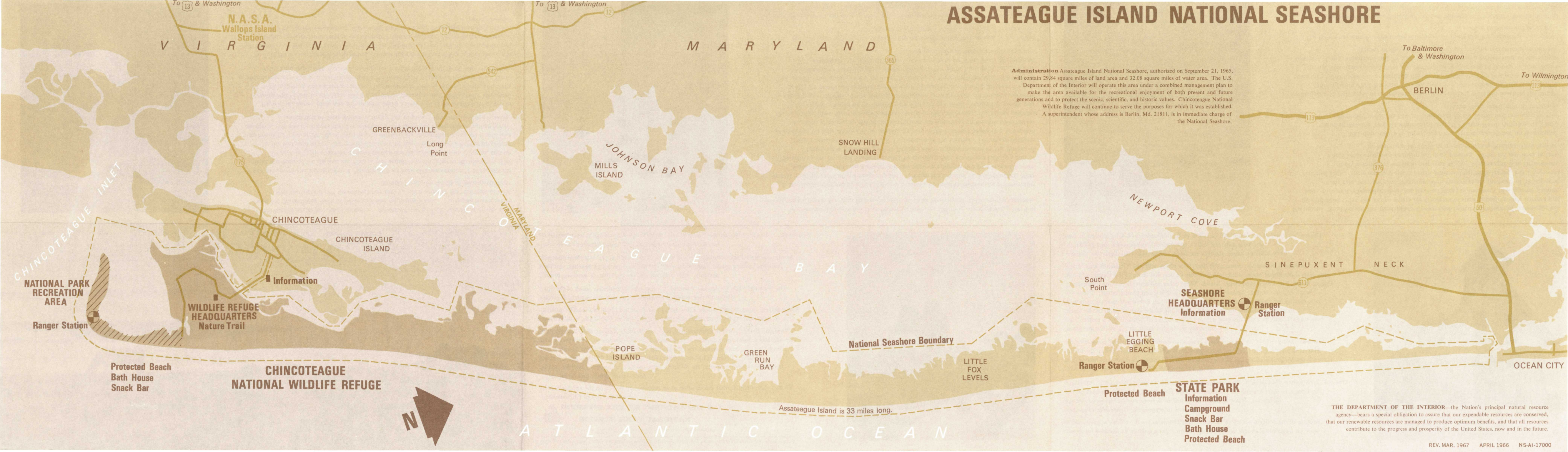
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# ASSATEAGUE ISLAND





# ASSATEAGUE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE



**Administration** Assateague Island National Seashore, authorized on September 21, 1965, will contain 29.84 square miles of land area and 32.08 square miles of water area. The U.S. Department of the Interior will operate this area under a combined management plan to make the area available for the recreational enjoyment of both present and future generations and to protect the scenic, scientific, and historic values. Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge will continue to serve the purposes for which it was established. A superintendent whose address is Berlin, Md. 21811, is in immediate charge of the National Seashore.

**NATIONAL PARK RECREATION AREA**

Ranger Station

Protected Beach  
Bath House  
Snack Bar

**CHINCOTEAGUE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

WILDLIFE REFUGE HEADQUARTERS  
Nature Trail

CHINCOTEAGUE

Information

CHINCOTEAGUE ISLAND

GREENBACKVILLE

Long Point

JOHNSON BAY  
MILLS ISLAND

SNOW HILL LANDING

POPE ISLAND

GREEN RUN BAY

LITTLE FOX LEVELS

Ranger Station  
LITTLE EGGING BEACH

Protected Beach

**STATE PARK**  
Information  
Campground  
Snack Bar  
Bath House  
Protected Beach

**SEASHORE HEADQUARTERS**  
Information

Ranger Station

South Point

SINEPUXENT NECK

BERLIN

To Baltimore & Washington

To Wilmington

OCEAN CITY

Assateague Island is 33 miles long.

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR—the Nation's principal natural resource agency—bears a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that our renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.