

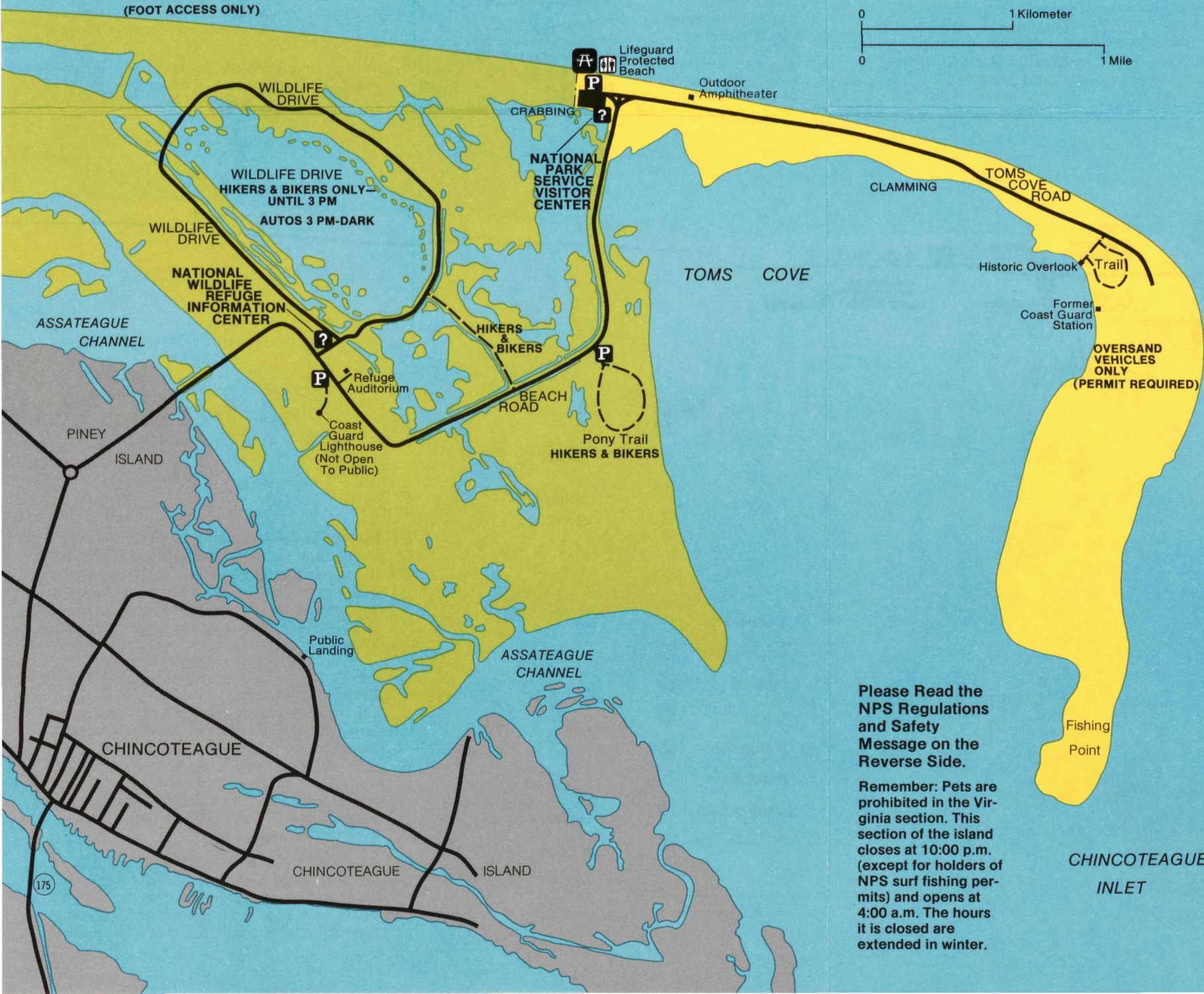
Access to the Island. Visitor facilities are located at the extreme ends of Assateague Island—on the north near Ocean City, Md., and on the south opposite Chincoteague, Va. More than 35 kilometers (22 miles) of roadless barrier island beach and marsh lie between these developed areas. To get from one end of the island to the other, you must drive back onto the mainland and follow the route suggested on the map above. Driving time is about 1-1/2 hours.

As shown, three separate governmental units manage the area within the boundary of the National Seashore: the State of Maryland and the National Park Service (NPS) and the Fish and Wildlife Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior. You should become familiar with the regulations of the area you plan to visit. Camping and day-use fees are collected at the State Park and at all NPS areas.

South Assateague: Virginia Section

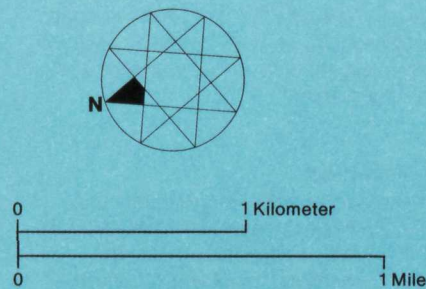
Visitors to this end of Assateague Island arrive from Chincoteague, Va., onto the widest part of the island. A paved road leads 4.8 kilometers (3 miles) through the southern end of the National Wildlife Refuge before it comes to the beach. To the left, northward to the Virginia/Maryland line, stretch 19 kilometers (12 miles) of open, natural shoreline managed as part of the Refuge. Southward is the area managed by the National Park Service. This long, thinning tail of shoreline that hooks away from the ocean, enclosing the sheltered waters of Toms Cove, provides the setting for many water-related activities.

19 KM/12 MI OF WILD BEACH TO MD/VA STATE LINE (FOOT ACCESS ONLY)



Please Read the NPS Regulations and Safety Message on the Reverse Side.

Remember: Pets are prohibited in the Virginia section. This section of the island closes at 10:00 p.m. (except for holders of NPS surf fishing permits) and opens at 4:00 a.m. The hours it is closed are extended in winter.



Camping

South Assateague Island has no family or individual campgrounds. Several commercial campgrounds and motels are located on Chincoteague Island.

Swimming

To be safe, especially with children, swim at the protected beach where lifeguards are on duty daily in summer. Bathhouse and picnic area are provided there.

Biking, Hiking, and Birdwatching

At certain hours, bikers and hikers can have Wildlife Drive to themselves. Hiking trails lead to some of the best vantage points for birdwatching.

Parking

On summer weekends, all parking areas along the ocean may be filled; at those times you might have to wait to park. Parking is usually available at the visitor center for the National Wildlife Refuge and in the Maryland Section of the island, or you may want to leave your car at your lodging and use a bicycle to get around.

On the Wildlife Refuge

With National Park Service assistance in the management of recreation on Toms Cove Hook, the entire Virginia end of Assateague Island is administered as a National Wildlife Refuge. As you might expect, the opportunity this presents for viewing animals in their natural habitat—especially shorebirds—is not to be found in too many other places on the Atlantic coast. Here a significant portion of coastal wetlands remains undisturbed.

What you might see, of course, depends on the time of year and the habits of various migratory birds like the snow geese, Canada geese, and whistling swans at home here in winter. Literature at Refuge headquarters will help you identify certain species of birds.

The Refuge sponsors family boat rides, fishing cruises, and a wildlife safari. For more information, write to the manager of the Wildlife Refuge.

We're Joining the Metric World

The National Park Service is introducing metric measurements in its publications to help Americans become acquainted with the metric system and to make interpretation more meaningful for park visitors from other nations.

Legend

Information	?
Parking	P
Picnic Area	⌘
Bathhouse	♿

Fishing, Clamming, and Crabbing

You can fish along the shoreline except in areas where it is prohibited. Be especially careful not to fish where swimming is encouraged. Records of some of the biggest fish caught and the bait that was used are kept at the visitor center.

Toms Cove is open for clamming between the high and low watermarks, and you can crab in the cove in the area indicated on the map.

Lodging

The closest motels, restaurants, stores, and private campgrounds are in the town of Chincoteague, Va.

Boating

Use the public ramp at Chincoteague Memorial Park to launch your boat. Boats can be rented in Chincoteague.

Wildlife Refuge regulations prohibit landing a boat anywhere other than at Fishing Point and designated areas on Toms Cove Hook.

Oversand Vehicles

Oversand vehicles are allowed on Assateague, but operators should respect two important regulations: (1) *You must stay on marked oversand vehicle routes.* In Virginia the route covers the last 4.8 kilometers (3 miles) of beach beyond Toms Cove Road. (2) *You must obtain a beach access permit for oversand travel.* To qualify, a vehicle must be 4-wheel-drive (or otherwise modified for sand travel), licensed, and equipped with a shovel, tire gauge, jack, jack support, and tow ropes or chain.

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Assateague Island National Seashore

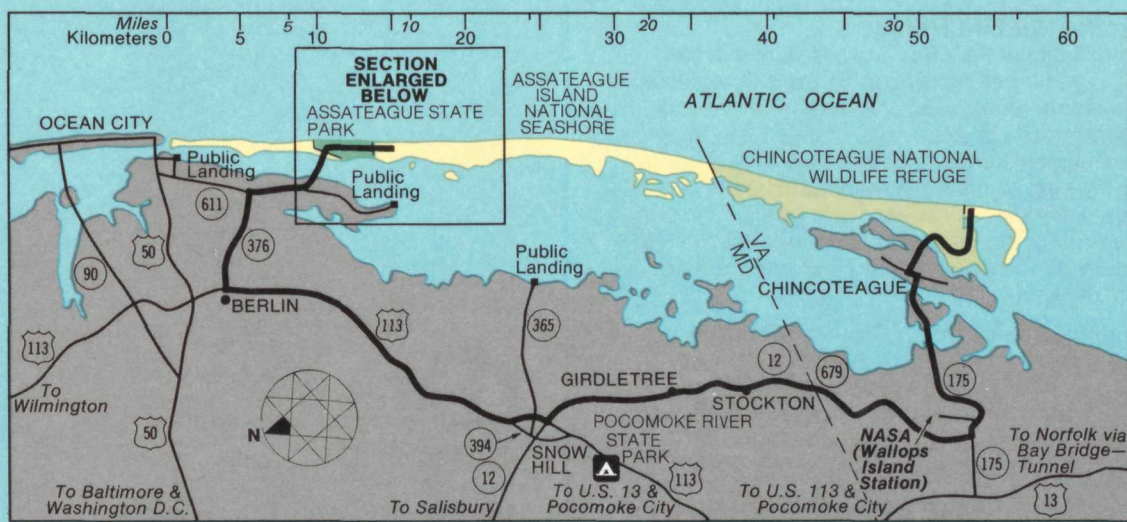
Within the authorized boundaries of the Seashore, three government agencies share jurisdiction: Assateague State Park is administered by the Maryland Park Service; the superintendent's address is Route 2, Box 293, Berlin, MD 21811, phone (301) 641-2120.

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior; the manager's address is P. O. Box 62, Chincoteague, VA 23336, phone (804) 336-6122.

The rest of Assateague Island National Seashore is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior; the superintendent's address is Route 2, Box 294, Berlin, MD 21811, phone (301) 641-1441, or (804) 336-6577 (Virginia district office).

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



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North Assateague: Maryland Section

The National Seashore headquarters and visitor center is on the mainland just before you cross the bridge to the north end of Assateague Island. It's a good place to begin a visit—to look at the exhibits and to browse through publications or have questions answered.

Camping and Swimming at North Beach

Assateague State Park, Md., occupies a 3.2-kilometer (2-mile) segment of the island just opposite the access bridge to the island. The modern campground has hot showers, flush toilets, and 311 spaces for camper trailers (no electric hookups). In summer, bathhouses, bait and tackle shop, and food service facilities are open and lifeguards are stationed on the beach.

Immediately south of the State Park, the National Park Service operates a seasonal primitive campground with portable toilets and cold water only. For summer day-users there are picnic tables and a bathhouse. The beach is also protected by lifeguards.

Some State Park campsites can be reserved in summer. The remaining sites in these two campgrounds, operating on a first come-first served basis, cannot meet summer demand, but there are private campgrounds on the mainland.

Advance reservations are accepted for the use of special group campsites; write to the Superintendent, Assateague Island National Seashore.

Hiking

Backpackers will want to venture out onto the beach. To stay overnight at any of three hike-in campsites you must obtain a permit.

Hikers usually catch sight of Assateague's famous shaggy-haired wild ponies that roam freely over the entire island. Keep a respectable distance because they may bite or kick. Please don't feed them.

Oversand Vehicles

Properly equipped oversand vehicles are allowed on a 22.5-kilometer (14-mile) beach route which begins at the end of North Beach Drive. Operators must have beach access permits (see note other side).

For Your Safety

In the Water . . . Swim where there are lifeguards. Air mattresses and flotation devices are prohibited on protected beaches; their use elsewhere is discouraged due to the risk of a knock off in deep water or being blown seaward. Avoid swimming in heavy surf. Leave the beach during a lightning storm. Back-country canoeing has its own set of hazards; thoroughly review the canoe-in folder.

On the Land . . . Be wary of overexposure to the sun which can lead to heat exhaustion or severe sunburn. Do not fly kites near powerlines. Barefooted children in the campgrounds can be hurt by shells, glass, or hot coals left in the sand. Guard against mosquitoes, ticks, and poison ivy which are abundant in summer. Back-country hikers should review the hike-in folder.

In Your Car . . . Go slow! Campgrounds, parking lots, and popular crabbing or clamming areas are crowded with backing cars, bicycles, and children darting between parked vehicles. Follow at a safe distance. Don't stop suddenly or obstruct traffic to observe ponies.

Seashore Regulations

Pets are prohibited in Assateague State Park; the Wildlife Refuge; Virginia section of the National Seashore; and in the hike-in and canoe-in campsites. Pets are permitted in the rest of the Maryland section, but they must be on leashes no longer than 3 meters (10 feet).

Vehicles must stay on marked routes. Beach access permits must be obtained before traveling in areas where oversand vehicles are allowed.

Overnight stays are permitted only in designated campgrounds, hike-in, or canoe-in sites.

Saltwater fish and shellfish may be taken without a license only in designated zones. Hunting of certain game species is permitted under State and Federal regulations.

A limited number of dead and empty shells may be collected for non-commercial use. Leave all plants and animals undisturbed.

Respect the rights of private landowners. Some land is still not part of the National Seashore.

A Place to Get Away . . .

A barrier island, Assateague is a product of the sea made of sand raised up from a gently sloping ocean floor by the action of waves. The island's origins and continued reshaping give it a restless, distant mood akin to the sea more than the mainland.

Assateague's low dunes bear the steady sweep of pungent sea breezes. Sometimes the island is assaulted by forceful gale winds that drive sand and high waves before them, leaving the shoreline dramatically changed. Gulls, terns, and other shorebirds appear and reappear at the edges of the water in rhythm with the tide's ebb and flow. Assateague—its sights and sounds—can fill the strong need we sometimes have to just get away.

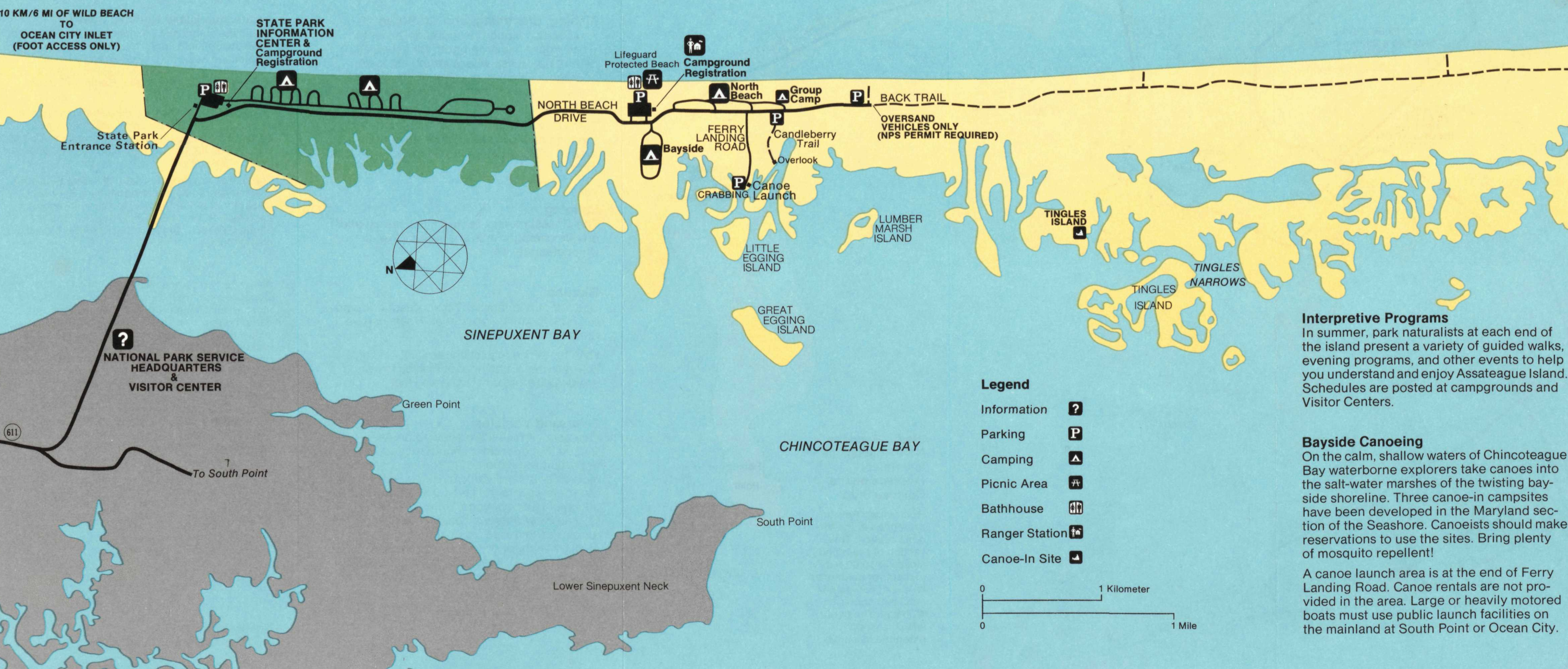
Visitors to Assateague soon take to the lure of sparkling beaches, mild surf, and moderate temperatures; forests and bayside marshes invite discovery, too. Birdwatchers, fishermen, canoeists, and beachcombers are drawn here year-round—indeed spring and autumn, with brisk nights and placid days, give you a chance to avoid the crowds of summer beachgoers. And, seashells and other cast-offs from the ocean washed up by winter storms are a part of the excitement and intrigue of Assateague.

Assateague Ponies—Free Spirits of the Seashore . . .

Legend long attributed the ponies' origin to horses that swam ashore from a wrecked Spanish galleon. Recent research in Spanish archives bears out the basic story. The original horses were much smaller, but they interbred with those that were imported from the mainland by Eastern Shore planters in the mid-17th century to graze on the island. During three centuries nature selected those animals best adapted to the island's harsh environment. Today's ponies are still smaller than horses, shaggy, and very sturdy. Marsh grasses and bayberry leaves supply the bulk of their food.

There are two herds on the island. The Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company owns the ponies in the Virginia section and perpetuates the traditional roundup and auction during the last week of July. The National Park Service manages the small Maryland herd.

Usually appearing docile, ponies are unpredictable and so can be dangerous. They can bite and kick. Do not feed or pet the ponies. Enjoy them from a safe distance.



Interpretive Programs

In summer, park naturalists at each end of the island present a variety of guided walks, evening programs, and other events to help you understand and enjoy Assateague Island. Schedules are posted at campgrounds and Visitor Centers.

Bayside Canoeing

On the calm, shallow waters of Chincoteague Bay waterborne explorers take canoes into the salt-water marshes of the twisting bayside shoreline. Three canoe-in campsites have been developed in the Maryland section of the Seashore. Canoeists should make reservations to use the sites. Bring plenty of mosquito repellent!

A canoe launch area is at the end of Ferry Landing Road. Canoe rentals are not provided in the area. Large or heavily motored boats must use public launch facilities on the mainland at South Point or Ocean City.