

Assateague Island National Seashore Backcountry Camping

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Assateague Island National Seashore offers two oceanside and four bayside backcountry campsites in Maryland that are accessible to back-packers, canoers, or kayakers. No camping is permitted in Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge in VA. Obtain current weather information before starting out. Paddlers should also obtain marine weather forecasts prior to departure for Coastal Waters from Fenwick Island to Chincoteague Island at: www.weather.gov.

Backcountry Regulations

- Permit is valid only for the trip leader, campsites, dates, and number of people specified on the permit. You may not change your itinerary after departing. No exceptions.
- The person issued the backcountry permit must have the permit in possession at all times. All trip participants are responsible for knowing and obeying the conditions of the permit.
- Backcountry permit must be visible at all times, at camp attach permit to the outside of your tent.
- All pets are prohibited.
- Permit will not be issued until all parties are present.
- Appropriate equipment for back-country conditions is recommended, including drinking water, raingear and Insect repellent.
- Backpackers' vehicles park at North Beach; paddlers park at Old Ferry Landing or Bayside Picnic Area. In Virginia, Toms Cove Visitor Center staff will provide parking information. Vehicles must display parking tag obtained with permit.
- Transportation of campers or any of their equipment by motorized boat or vehicle (including vehicles with Over-Sand Vehicle permits) is strictly **prohibited**.
- Camp within 50 feet of the fire rings at Bayside sites. Do not move fire rings or picnic tables.
- Camping is allowed within the posted boundaries at Oceanside sites. No camping on the beach or dunes. Do not move the picnic tables.
- Bayside fires permitted only in fire rings provided at campsites; Oceanside fires must be on beach below the high tide.
- Only dead wood on the ground may be collected for firewood. Driftwood is scarce. Burning trash is prohibited.
- Do not leave fires unattended. All fires must be completely extinguished with water. Do not cover them with sand.
- Petting, feeding, or approaching any wildlife, including horses, is prohibited.
- You must pack out all of your trash. Do not bury, burn or throw trash into toilets. Trash bags are available upon request.
- Glass bottles and containers are prohibited in backcountry campsites.
- Entering or approaching any buildings or closed areas is prohibited.
- Hunting camps are not permitted.



The National Park Service strongly encourages the practice of Leave No Trace principles within the Seashore.
 •Plan Ahead and Prepare •Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces •Dispose of Waste Properly •Leave What You Find •Minimize Campfire Impacts •Respect Wildlife •Be Considerate of Other Visitors Visit www.lnt.org for more info.

Obtaining a Permit

A Backcountry Camping Permit is required for use of backcountry sites on Assateague Island. Permits may be obtained at the Maryland District Ranger Station or the Toms Cove Visitor Center in Virginia. Permits may be obtained for up to 7 days per trip on a first come/first served basis on the day of departure. The permit fee is \$10.00 per person (16 and older). Park/Refuge entrance fees are also required. Reservations are not accepted due to sudden and severe changes in weather.

Check-In Times

Adjust your start time to the lowest level of experience in your party and local weather forecast. Permits will not be issued after the times listed below based on distance to sites.

Campground	Leaving Maryland	Leaving Virginia
Tingles Island	2 hours before sunset	8 hours before sunset
Little Levels	2 hours before sunset	8 hours before sunset
Pine Tree	2 hours before sunset	8 hours before sunset
Green Run	4 hours before sunset	6 hours before sunset
Pope Bay	4 hours before sunset	4 hours before sunset
State Line	4 hours before sunset	4 hours before sunset

Mode of Access

- Hikers generally prefer the hard packed sand near the surf. Dune crossings are signed. Expect to encounter up to 145 motor vehicles with Over-Sand Vehicle permits along the waters edge, especially during the summer months.
- Canoe & kayak rentals are available on Assateague Island in peak season. The Chamber of Commerce for Ocean City Maryland and Chincoteague Virginia may also provide information on local vendors. Some outfitters will not rent during a Small Craft Advisory.

Site Description and Facilities

No fresh water is available in the backcountry. You must carry in what you will need. One gallon per person per day is the recommended minimum. Potable water is available at the picnic shelter.

Oceanside campsites

- camp only within boundaries designated by signed posts
- share picnic tables and vault toilet
- Little Levels: 5 groups or 25 people
- State Line: 5 groups or 25 people

Bayside sites

- wooded (except Pope Bay - limited shade)
- individual picnic tables and fire rings
- restricted to a 50' radius of the fire rings
- share a vault toilet
- Tingles Island: 5 groups or 25 people
- Pine Tree: 5 groups or 25 people
- Green Run: 3 groups or 15 people
- Pope Bay: 2 groups or 10 people

Periods of Use/Closures

Open Year Round, except: Campsites may be closed at any time due to severe weather. One or more sites may be closed in spring and/or summer due to bird nesting. Bayside sites are traditionally closed for 1 week in late October and up to 2 weeks starting the Saturday after Thanksgiving due to firearm hunting. Please check the park's website or call the Ranger Station at 410-641-3030 for closure dates each year. Camping on the bayside in summer is not recommended due to high concentrations of biting insects.

Backcountry Safety – Your Responsibility

Travel in the backcountry has inherent risks, and rescue is never a certainty. Backcountry users must assume complete responsibility for their own safety. Constant attention, good judgment, physical fitness; preparation, knowledge, proper equipment and skill in its use are all essential for a safe trip.

Finding the Sites

Hikers will find 12" x 12" signs on the beach close to the dunes pointing in the direction of the campsite. Kilometer markers are also posted as points of reference. Always pay attention to your location; signs may be missing due to storm washouts. For paddlers, bayside signs are located on the marsh edge upon approach to the sites. Note: No backcountry directional signs are located on the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge.

Coordinates of the backcountry sites are listed on this map for use with a GPS unit. USGS topographic maps are highly recommended for paddlers and can be purchased by contacting www.USGS.gov.

Health and Safety – Your Responsibility

Due to high winds and soft sands, paddling and hiking can be unexpectedly rugged, even for the experienced. Use long tent stakes to secure your tent in the sand.

Rapid weather changes are common. Always check the weather forecast and do not hike or paddle when extreme weather or coastal storms are predicted. Get off the bay or beach during thunderstorms, but DO NOT get under a tree.

Paddlers are strongly discouraged from backcountry trips during small craft advisories. If whitecaps are present on the bay, we do not recommend paddling.

The US Coast Guard requires a personal flotation device for each occupant of a watercraft.

Biting insects and ticks are abundant during warm months. The potential for Lyme disease exists on Assateague Island. Biting flies are abundant during the humid summer months. Mosquitoes are abundant from mid-May until frost.

Poison Ivy is common in woods and shrubs.

