



Backcountry Beach Camping on Santa Rosa Island

Backcountry beach camping is available during certain times of year along Santa Rosa Island's extensive, beautiful, and undeveloped 55-mile coastline. This coastline is reminiscent of a California in days gone by. The intertidal pools and sandy beaches are much the same as the ones the early Chumash Indians, early explorers, and early ranchers may have known. They represent an important interface between land and sea. Many species of birds, marine mammals, and plant communities use these fragile areas to mate, breed, and forage in the undisturbed serenity found here.

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.

NOTE: In 2011, backcountry beachcamping is only open from August 15th to October 10th to ensure visitor safety during a permitted commercial hunting operation of non-native deer and elk and to protect wildlife nesting/hauling areas. Visitors to the island need to be aware of these closures prior to planning their trips. For more information, please see "Open Dates" below and www.nps.gov/chis/parkmgmt/public-notices.htm.

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 Dates 2011

August 15 - 27

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

August 28 - September 15

Only East Point to South Point Beaches (Southeast Quadrant) are open to backcountry camping for boaters, kayakers, and backpackers. In addition, no hiking beyond the southeast quadrant beaches is permitted due to hunt operations.

Also during this time backpackers may only access the southeast quadrant beaches using three routes from Bechers Bay:

1. South/Wreck Road to reach Jolla Vieja and Ford Point beaches
2. South/Wreck Road to Clapp Spring Junction (Sierra Pablo Road) to access the ridge route to San Augustine beach
3. Coastal Road to small pocket beach just south of East Point

September 16 - October 10

For backpackers, only East Point to South Point Beaches (Southeast Quadrant) are open to backcountry camping. In addition, no hiking beyond the southeast quadrant coastline is permitted due to hunt operations and access to the southeast quadrant beaches from Bechers Bay is only allowed via the three routes described previously.

For boaters and kayakers, all beaches except those between Carrington Point and East Point are open to backcountry camping. However, no hiking beyond the coastline is permitted due to hunt operations.

October 11 - December 31

Backcountry beachcamping is closed due to hunt operations to remove all non-native deer and elk from Santa Rosa Island per a court settlement.

January 1 - August 15, 2012

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

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.

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.

The closest beach for backpackers and kayakers 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. 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 (the only period this is allowed is August 15 - 27 due to the hunt), 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 road during certain times of year. 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.

After September 15, the closest beach camping for kayakers is Lobo Canyon (approximately six kayaking miles from the pier). The beach at Lobo Canyon is small and may be washed out at higher tides. In addition, pounding surf and strong winds constantly reshape this beach. Due to the hunt in 2011, backpackers may not visit this northwest coast.

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	--
Lobo Canyon	4.5	6

Water

Since the water in the streams is contaminated with coliform bacteria and giardia, it is recommended that you boil, filter, and/or add iodine to the water. (Potable water is available in the Water Canyon campground.) Water is generally available in island canyons during the winter and early spring. Although nine canyons 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. These nine canyons include: Water, Old Ranch House (intermittent), San Augustine, Wreck, Jolla Vieja, Arlington, Soledad, Cow (intermittent), and Lobo (intermittent). Clapp Spring, near the top of San Augustine Canyon, also has water year-round. Look for the spigot just down the road from the actual spring.

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, five 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.

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/>.

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.

Regulations:

- Check with a ranger on arrival for an on-site orientation.
- Camping is prohibited year-round between Carrington and East Point, except in the Water Canyon campground.
- From March 1 to September 15, the coastline from and including Skunk Point to just before East Point is closed to landing or hiking to protect the nesting area for the snowy plover, a federally listed, threatened shorebird.
- 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.whennaturecalls.com/products/restop2.html, www.biffybag.com, www.rei.com/product/692303.*
- No fires are allowed.

Reservations

Backcountry campers must first secure boat or air transportation to Santa Rosa through the park's concessionaires or by their own private vessel. Camping reservations are required for beach camping. Reservations are free and must be obtained in advance by calling Channel

Islands National Park at (805) 658-5711. Separate camping reservations are needed for the established campground at Water Canyon and must be obtained in advance by calling 1-877-444-6777 or through the internet at <http://recreation.gov>.

