

cumberland island

Cumberland Island National Seashore was established October 23, 1972, to preserve the scenic, scientific and historical values of the largest and most southerly island off the coast of Georgia.

In accordance with Congressional legislation, the Seashore will be permanently protected in its primitive state except for certain portions especially adaptable for recreational uses. No road or causeway from the mainland will be constructed.

The acquisition of land and the planning for future use of the Seashore are underway. Approximately 85 percent of the island has been acquired; some longtime private owners have the option to retain rights for themselves and their successors.

Currently the National Park Service has a temporary headquarters in St. Marys; future plans call for a permanent visitor center and ferry docking facility on the mainland. Island visitor centers are located at Sea Camp Dock and Dungeness Dock.

We hope you enjoy your visit.



To reach St. Marys, take Ga. 40 east from I-95 near Kingsland.

MAINLAND FACILITIES

Motel accommodations are available in nearby communities. Camping facilities may be found at nearby state parks and private commercial campgrounds.

WEATHER

Cumberland's climate is moderate with short, mild winters. Summer temperatures range from about 27° C to 35° C (80s to low 90s° F) with some humidity. In summer, we suggest you visit the beach early and late in the day and retreat to the shaded interior forest during the hot mid-day hours.

How to Get There

A National Park Service passenger ferry provides access to the Seashore from St. Marys, Georgia, daily except Tuesday and Wednesday. The ferry may run every day during peak season. Mainland departure times are 9:15 a.m. and 1:45 p.m. Island departure times are 12:15 and 4:45 p.m. The trip takes 45 minutes; a fee is charged. Ferry reservations are advisable and can be made by calling 912-882-4335.

The area enclosed by the green boundary line has been designated a wilderness area.

WHAT YOU SHOULD CARRY

Before leaving St. Marys, day- and overnight-visitors should carefully consider what supplies—food, drinks, suntan lotion, film, sunglasses, and insect repellent—they will need, for there are no stores on the island. Casual dress, comfortable walking shoes, and rain gear are also recommended.

ACTIVITIES

Visitors to the park may explore the beach and live-oak forest, view birds and other wildlife, or visit some of the island's historical areas. These activities are primarily walking experiences; no vehicles are available for rent. When the weather is appropriate, swimming can be enjoyed. Ranger-conducted activities are available in peak season. Special programs for groups may be arranged.

FISHING

You may fish without a license in the saltwater. Surf fishing often yields catches of red bass, spotted trout, and blue fish. Anglers probing the waters of Cumberland Sound are apt to catch croaker, drum, trout, and red bass.

CAMPING

Overnight visitors may choose between developed campgrounds and one of several primitive backcountry sites. Camping is limited to 7 days. The developed campground offers restrooms, showers, and drinking water. Campfires are permitted in the developed campground, but only fallen wood may be burned. There are no facilities in the back country, and campfires are not allowed so a portable stove is necessary. Backcountry camping permits are required; hiking trail maps are available. Campers should make reservations and be sure to carry adequate equipment and supplies.

SAFETY

The ruins of Dungeness and most of its outbuildings are unstable. For your protection, these structures are closed.

Cumberland Island is home to several species of poisonous snakes, notably the diamondback rattler and the cottonmouth moccasin. Please take normal precautions when venturing into areas where vegetation is thick.

Lifeguards are not provided; please be careful swimming. There is a gradual slope offshore; sharks may be present in the surf.

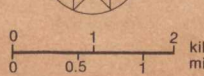
The Seashore is closed to the public during managed hunts. Be alert for possible hunting activities on adjacent private lands.

OTHER FERRY INFORMATION

Do not miss the ferry from the island. It leaves as scheduled. If you miss the boat, you must camp or charter a boat to transport you to the mainland. The ferry does not transport cars, bicycles, or pets.

For more information, write to the Superintendent at P.O. Box 806, St. Marys, Georgia 31558.

- Campground
- Primitive camping
- Saltwater Marshes
- Dunes and Beaches
- Non-park Land
- Private Property
- Live Oak Areas, Marshes, Freshwater and Fields



Tranquillity. If one word describes Cumberland Island, it is tranquillity. Here birds sing, palmetto fronds chatter in the wind, and surf rolls in upon the shore. This sweet music lulls us into a sense of remoteness from the rest of the world and a feeling of peacefulness within ourselves.



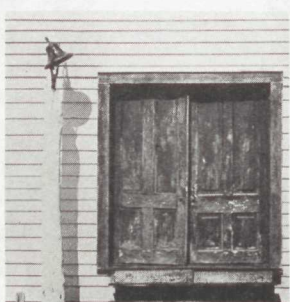
All along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts from New Jersey to Texas, a series of barriers defends the mainland from waves and winds of the open ocean. They are no more than sandy bars in some places, but along the Georgia coast they form the relatively substantial Sea Islands, one of which is Cumberland.

Cumberland is 26 kilometers (16 miles) long by 5 kilometers (3 miles) at its widest point, and the island rides low in the water with only an occasional dune reaching 15 meters (50 feet) above sea level. Here the soil is sandy and life-supporting nutrients leach rapidly, but a surprising variety of plant communities have adapted to the environment.

The island is separated from the mainland by several kilometers of salt marsh, river, and sound. In the salt marsh, where a waving cordgrass known as *Spartina* is king, life varies with the high and low tides. When the tide's in, the mosquitofish swims by, ducks paddle and feed. And when the tide's out, fiddler crabs climb out of holes and dance sideways across the mud surface, oysters are exposed, and long-legged wading birds appear—great blue, little blue, and Louisiana herons; snowy and American egrets; white ibis, and wood stork. The salt marsh and estuary are also highly productive food farms for crabs, shrimp, sea trout, and other animals.



Live oaks



The church at Halfmoon Bluff

In the central part of the island, weirdly contorted, widely spreading live-oak limbs laced with woody vines and Spanish moss form a dense canopy. Beneath the trees, and further enhancing the enchanted forest feeling, are the chartreuse fans of the palmetto. Elsewhere grow willow oak, laurel oak, magnolia, red bay, holly, and several kinds of pines: longleaf, slash, pond, and loblolly. These forests support deer, squirrels, and raccoons, while the freshwater and brackish ponds and sloughs interspersed throughout the island support alligators, mink, and otter.

And yet, Cumberland's interior is not undisturbed wilderness. Seen are some signs of man's activities: the cutting of live oaks for ship timbers and the clearing of lands for the growing of Sea Island cotton and fruits. Feral hogs and cattle have made their mark, too.

On the fine, white sand beach are shells of all shapes and descriptions, indicative of the abundant life offshore. The converging parallel lines on the cockles, the arrangement of starfish arms, and the spirals of whelks—their geometric simplicity attracts our eye.

Sanderlings fly over the beach, seemingly a part of the wind. Swallowlike terns dash back and forth, gracefully dropping head-first into the water for small fish. Black skimmers cut the surface with their lower mandibles, and pelicans dive for a meal. These birds are just a few of the more than 300 species that have been seen on the island, and many of them nest here.

Behind the beach, sea oats and several viny plants trap some of the blowing sands, and dunes gradually build up. The dunes, undeveloped by man, are landmarks for female loggerhead turtles that come ashore annually to lay eggs.

For the turtles, for other wildlife, and for man, Cumberland Island is indeed a tranquil refuge.



Sanderlings in the surf

PARK REGULATIONS

All of the park's historical, archeological, and natural resources are protected: antique and artifact hunting is not allowed; do not pick flowers or cut vegetation; feeding, capturing, or hunting wildlife is prohibited.

Shell collectors are asked to take no live shells and to limit their collection to a handful or so.

There are no facilities as yet for docking private boats on the island.

Several parcels of land on the island are still privately owned. Please respect the rights of these residents and do not trespass.

Help protect the sand dunes by not walking over them. They are very susceptible to human and animal traffic. Stabilized dunes serve as a protective barrier against wind and storm. When unstabilized, they tend to move westward, engulfing the forest and filling ponds.

Please help keep the island clean by taking food and drink containers and other litter off the island with you.

Cumberland Island National Seashore is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. 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

A CHRONOLOGY OF MAN'S LIFE ON CUMBERLAND

As early as 4,000 years ago, marine-oriented Indians lived on Cumberland Island, which they called Missoe (Sassafras). They lived on shellfish and wild game, and their control of the island and its waters was undisputed until the arrival of the Spanish.

1566

The Spanish governor of Florida directs construction of a fort on the island, which the Spanish name San Pedro. A Franciscan mission established on the island converts large numbers of Timucuan Indians. During the next 200 years, England, France, and Spain vie for control of the Southeast.

1736

Gen. James Oglethorpe, founder of the English colony of Georgia, renames the island Cumberland at the suggestion of Toonahowi, an Indian who visited the Duke of Cumberland in England. The English build Fort St. Andrews on the northern end and Fort Prince William on the extreme southern end as bastions against the Spanish. They also build a hunting lodge known as Dungeness.

1783

Nathanael Greene and Catharine Greene Miller



Gen. Nathanael Greene purchases a half interest in a large acreage. The Revolutionary War hero intends to harvest the island's live-oak timber for the shipbuilding industry but dies in 1786 without realizing a substantial profit. His widow, Catharine, marries Phineas Miller and builds Dungeness, an impressive 4-story tabby mansion. Many guests, including inventor Eli Whitney, enjoy the Millers' hospitality.

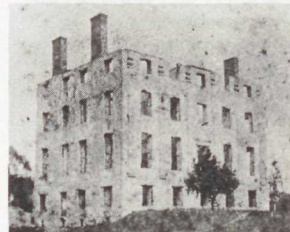
1818

Gen. Lighthorse Harry Lee, a Revolutionary War friend of the Greens, is ill and puts ashore from a schooner. He dies here and is buried in the Dungeness cemetery. (His remains were reburied in 1913 at Lexington, Va., next to those of his son, Robert E. Lee.)

1862

Cumberland's plantation era ends when Union troops round up the island's slaves and transport them to Amelia Island. After the war, some freedmen return and settle near Halfmoon Bluff. Fire destroys Dungeness mansion in this period.

Greene Dungeness in ruins



1881

Thomas Carnegie



Thomas Carnegie, brother of financier Andrew, purchases Dungeness property and begins building an elegant home. Carnegie dies shortly after the mansion is completed. His widow, Lucy, acquires most of the island.

Carnegie Dungeness in its heyday



1972

Cumberland Island National Seashore is established.