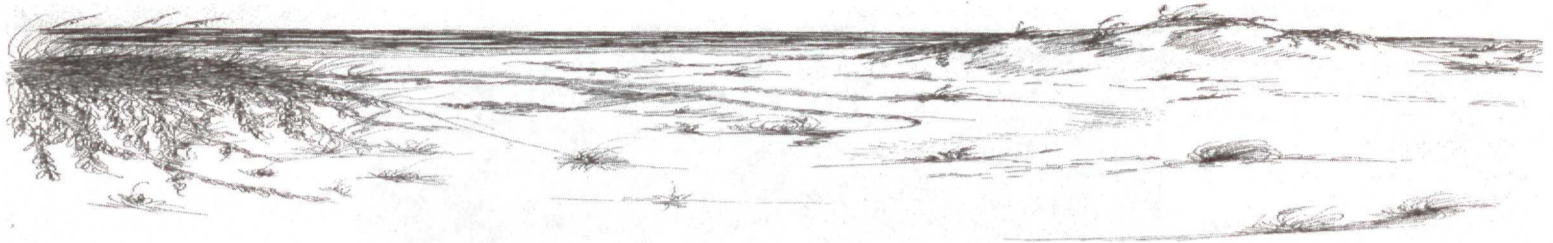




West Ship Island



West Ship Island, located 12 miles south of the Mississippi coastline, is one of the few barrier islands, relatively untouched by human development. Transportation to the island is by passenger ferry service or private boat. Ship Island excursions transports passengers from the Gulfport Small Craft Harbor, located south of the intersection of U.S. Highways 90 and 49, to the island. Ferry service is available March through October, weather permitting. Please help the National Park Service protect this unique island by not littering or interfering with the plant and animal life.

Know Before You Go

From sunrise to sunset, West Ship Island is open to visitors. Camping is not allowed. The north end of the pier is reserved for passenger ferry docking during its operation. Private boaters can dock at other designated pier areas. Pack light. The only way to get around West Ship Island is by foot, and all beach gear must be carried.

NO GLASS CONTAINERS ARE ALLOWED ON THE ISLAND

Tours

Ranger-led tours of Fort Massachusetts are presented daily during tour boat season (March through October). Be cautious of your footing in dark and slippery places.

Swimming

A section on the Gulf side is reserved for swimmers. Lifeguards may or may not be available. Strong rip currents occur.

Be safe and don't swim alone.

Beach Combing

A hike around the west tip of the island takes about an hour. Visitors can enjoy bird watching, shell collecting or taking pictures. All plants and animals are protected including living shells.

Facilities

On the north shore you will find the tour boat dock, ranger station, picnic pavillions, restrooms, first aid station and Fort Massachusetts. A boardwalk, 1/3 of a mile long, crosses from the north shore to the Gulf of Mexico. Nearby, snack bar and beach rental stands are open from March to October. Outdoor showers, bathhouse and shaded picnic pavillions are conveniently located nearby.

Private Boaters

Plan your boat trip carefully, and be sure you have adequate fuel and supplies. Rangers cannot give or sell gas to private boaters nor can they tow disabled boats back to the mainland. Boats must anchor at least 500 feet outside the designated swim beach on the south side. Know state and federal regulations for the safe operation of private watercraft.

PWC

As of 2004, personal watercraft (PWC) is not permitted within the seashore boundary. For up-to-date information, go online at www.nps.gov/guis.

Pets

Pets are not allowed on the tour boats, buildings, or on the beach. Please do not leave pets in the mainland parking lots. Pets from private boats are permitted, but must be leashed at all times.

Fishing

Salt-water fishing licenses are required in Mississippi. Licenses can be purchased before traveling to the island or at the Island Snack Bar. Be aware of the fish size and possession limits set by the state.

Accessibility

All facilities are accessible except for the second level of Fort Massachusetts. A video of the fort's upper level is available for viewing. Street and beach wheelchairs can be loaned out on a first come, first serve basis.

Sea Life

Use caution to avoid jellyfish and stingrays. Shuffle your feet while wading in the water to scare stingrays away. If you do get stung from a jellyfish apply vinegar to the irritated skin. Sharks inhabit the waters. Be alert especially in the mornings and early evenings

Emergency

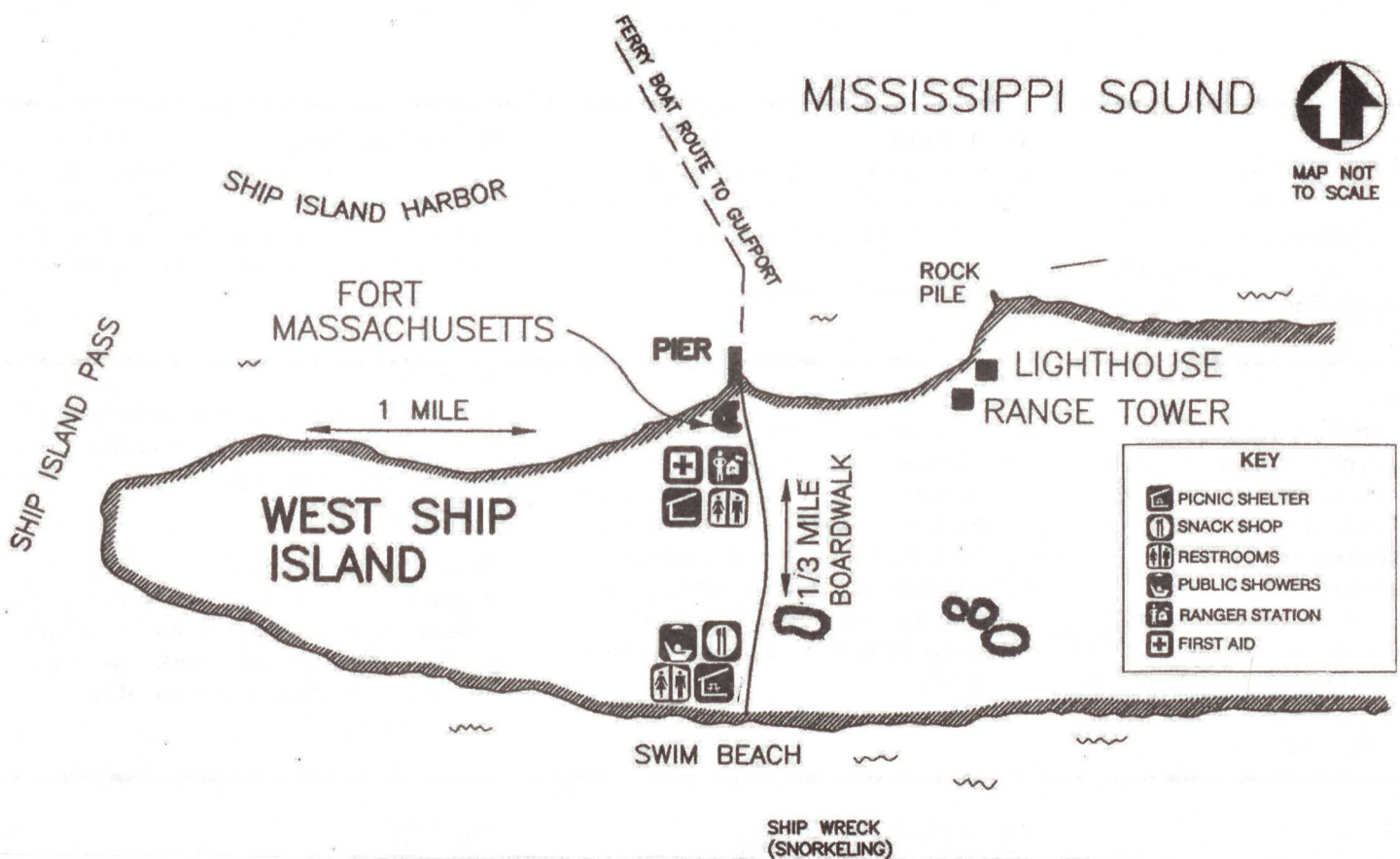
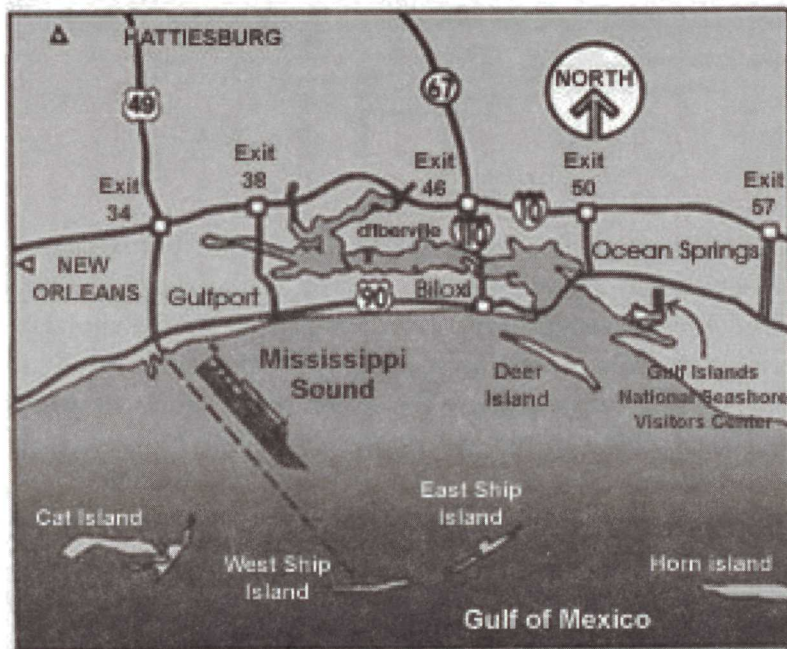
Emergency assistance may be available at the ranger station. Approach uniformed concessionaires or park employees for assistance.

Sun

The sun is very intense. Stay out of the direct sun from 10:00am-2:00pm. Use high SPF factor sun block lotion to prevent sunburn. Drink plenty of water.

Changing Weather and Surf

Watch the weather. Storms can quickly form over water. Stay out of the water, off piers, or off the fort during lightning storms. Seek shelter; rough surf and rip currents are dangerous.



GULF OF MEXICO

For information about the Passenger Ferry Schedule call
 Ship Islands Excursion 1-228-864-1014 or 1-866-466-7386 or visit online at www.msship.com
 or
 Gulf Islands National Seashore 1-228-875-0821 or visit online at www.nps.gov/guis