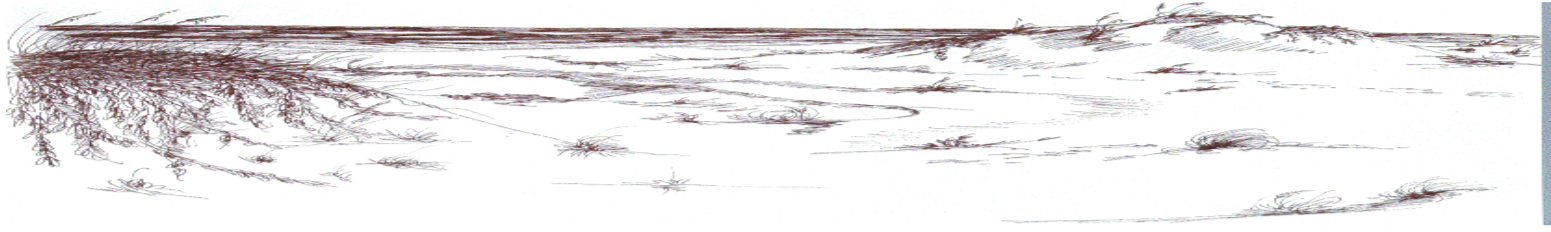




West Ship Island



Twelve miles south of the Mississippi coastline, West Ship Island 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 to the island from the Gulfport Small Craft Harbor, which is south of the intersection of U.S. Highways 90 and 49. Ferry service is available March through October, weather permitting. Please help the National Park Service protect this unique island by not littering or disturbing 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. Please practice the Leave No Trace principle of "Pack it in-Pack it out".

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 so be safe and don't swim alone.

Beach Combing

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

Facilities

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

Private Boaters

Plan your boat trip carefully, and be sure you have enough 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.

pier, a flat wake zone extends ½ mile from the shore and ½ mile from either side of the pier. PWCs and all watercraft are not allowed within the swim beach area on the south shore. For up-to-date information on the use of PWCs go on-line at www.nps.gov/guis.

PWCs

As of 2006, personal watercraft (PWC) are permitted within the seashore boundary with restrictions. There is a flat wake zone 300 yards from park shorelines. In addition, at the

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. Since sharks inhabit the waters, be alert especially in the mornings and early evenings when sharks feed.

Fishing

Salt-water fishing licenses are required in Mississippi. Purchase licenses before traveling to the island. 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. Street and beach wheelchairs may be loaned, on a first-come, first-available basis.

Pets

Pets are not allowed on the ferries, in buildings, or on the swim beach. Service dogs are permitted. Please do not leave pets in cars at the mainland parking lots. Pets kept on private boats are permitted, but must be leashed at all times.

Emergency

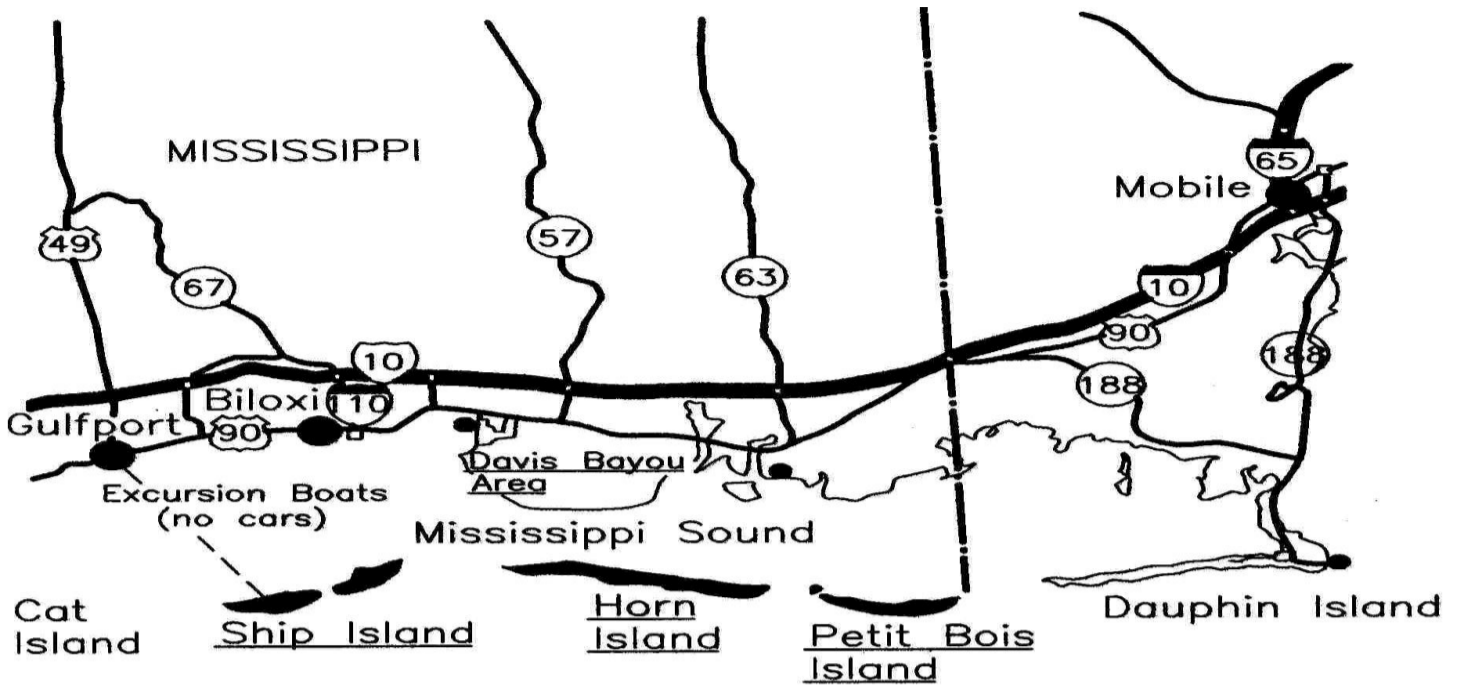
Emergency assistance may be available at the ranger station. If not, contact uniformed park, ferry, or concession employees for assistance.

Sun

The sun is very intense. Stay out of the direct sun from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. 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. During lightning storms, stay out of the water, off piers, and off the top of the fort. Seek shelter. Rough surf and rip currents are dangerous.



VICINITY MAP



For information about the passenger ferry schedule, call Ship Island Excursions 1-228-864-1014 or 1-866-466-7386. Visit on-line at www.msshipisland.com.

Gulf Islands National Seashore 1-228-230-4100. Visit on-line at www.nps.gov/guis or follow us on Twitter at @GulfIslandsNPS.