

Isle Royale

NATIONAL PARK • MICHIGAN

A wilderness archipelago in Lake Superior, a roadless land of wild creatures, unspoiled forests, lakes, and scenic shores, accessible only by boat or floatplane—this is Isle Royale National Park. Here you are close to nature, whether camping, hiking, fishing, canoeing, or studying by sight or by camera the flowers and trees, the mammals, birds, and insects.

MAN ON ISLE ROYALE

Long before Europeans saw Isle Royale, Indians mined copper here. Using hand-held beach cobbles, they hammered out chunks of pure copper from the hard bedrock. Archeologists have excavated their shallow mining pits, some of which date as far back as 4,500 years. When the French took possession of the island in 1671, they found Indians living here who did not remember the copper miners of old. It was the French, lured to the island by the fur trade, who named it Isle Royale.

In 1783, Isle Royale became part of the United States, though it was recognized as Chippewa territory until 1843, when the tribe ceded it to the United States. Prospectors swarmed over the island and burned large acreages of forest to expose copper outcroppings and to clear space for mining settlements. Lumbering for local needs also flourished.

Mining continued until 1899, and the ruins of many of these activities are still evident. The amount of copper on the island had been adequate for the crude tools of ancient Indians but was insufficient for commercial mining.

In the early 1900's when Isle Royale became popular for summer homes and excursion boat tours, many visitors realized the island's value as a wilderness retreat. The movement to preserve it, spearheaded by Albert Stoll, Jr., a Detroit newspaperman, resulted in the establishment of the national park on April 3, 1940.

PLANTS AND ANIMALS

Forests dominate the scenery and the ecology of the park. Evergreens and hardwoods meet on Isle Royale and form an outstanding example of forest transition. The interior and upland regions of the park have pure hardwood stands, whereas the cool, moist shores and lake borders tend to have mixed evergreen forests. Despite the short summer growing season, Isle Royale has several hundred species of wildflowers.

Isle Royale is 15 miles from the nearest mainland shore and the only animals that live here today are those that could fly, swim, drift across the water barrier, or cross the ice that occasionally forms a bridge to Canada.

More than 200 kinds of birds have been listed. The red squirrel is the most frequently observed small mammal. Other common mammals include the beaver, red fox, snowshoe hare, and moose. Moose are found throughout the park, and are often seen wading in the shallow inland lakes. They were not on the island before 1900, but soon thereafter a number of them either swam or ventured over the ice from Canada and have since flourished. Wolves, rarely observed by people, prey upon the moose, culling the herds and keeping the population down to levels the island can support.

GEOLOGY OF THE ISLAND

Isle Royale is the creation of volcanoes, ice, and water. Its billion-year-old rocks are basalt lava flows layered with river-deposited sandstone and conglomerate. Originally horizontal, these rock beds were bent downward long ago to form the great basin now occupied by Lake Superior. Isle Royale is on the northwest rim of this basin.

Within the last 3 million years, numerous glaciers have covered Isle Royale, ground smooth the surfaces of its rocks, gouged out basins that are now lakes, and exposed layers of the softer sandstone and conglomerate. Water has eroded these soft rock strata into valleys that now extend the full length of the island. Between these valleys, the rock beds of hard basalt form long ridges, such as massive Greenstone Ridge, backbone of the island.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Interpretive program. To help you enjoy this natural area, park rangers conduct nature walks and evening slide programs. The schedule is posted at campgrounds and ranger stations. Self-guiding nature trails with interpretive signs and exhibits are further aids to your understanding of this park.

Publications about the park's history and natural history, as well as maps of the trail system and waterways, are sold at the park. For a pricelist, write to the Isle Royale Natural History Association, Isle Royale National Park, Houghton, MI 49931.

Season. Isle Royale National Park is open to visitors from about May 15 to October 20. Mid-summer temperatures rarely exceed 80°; evenings are usually cool. Rain, frequent throughout the season, provides moisture for the lush north woods and the lakes and streams that make Isle Royale the kind of park it is.

Accommodations. Lodge and housekeeping facilities are available from late June to Labor Day. For reservations and rates during the season, write to Rock Harbor Lodge, Houghton, MI 49931; out of season, write to National Park Concessions, Inc., Mammoth Cave, KY 42259.

Transportation to the park. Transportation from the mainland to Isle Royale is by boat or floatplane. Reservations are recommended.

Houghton to Rock Harbor (May to October). For schedules, rates, and reservations for the NPS boat RANGER III, write to the Superintendent, Isle Royale National Park, Houghton, MI 49931.

Because the waters of Lake Superior are often rough, it is not safe to use boats of 20 feet or less to go to the island. However, such boats can be transported to Isle Royale on the RANGER III. The private boat operators mentioned below will transport small runabouts and canoes. Gasoline for your boat cannot be carried on commercial boats or planes but may be purchased at Rock Harbor and Windigo.

Copper Harbor to Rock Harbor (late June to Labor Day). Also pre- and post-season chartered trips. Write to Isle Royale Queen II, Copper Harbor, MI 49918.

Grand Portage to Windigo (late June to Labor Day) and *Grand Portage to Rock Harbor via Windigo* (May to October). Write to Sivertson Brothers, 366 Lake Avenue South, Duluth, MN 55802. One boat circumnavigates Isle Royale and will discharge and pick up passengers at various points.

Houghton to Windigo via Rock Harbor (late June to Labor Day). Write to Isle Royale Seaplane Service, Box 371, Houghton, MI 49931.

All camping parties and those traveling in their own boats are required, upon arrival, to register at an information or ranger station.

Firearms are prohibited in the park.

Pets. Dogs (except for guide dogs), cats, and other pets are prohibited within the park.

Communications. Rock Harbor has postal service from mid-June through Labor Day; mail is delivered two or three times weekly. Address: Rock Harbor Lodge, Isle Royale National Park, MI 55617. Rock Harbor Lodge and Windigo have emergency telegraph service. Incoming telegrams should be addressed to the terminal point desired, care of National Park Concessions, Inc., 87 North Ripley Street, Houghton, MI 49931.

Medical services. Professional medical services are not available at the park. Seriously ill or injured persons must be transported to the mainland. All campers, boaters, and hikers should carry a first-aid kit.

Park seasons and schedules vary from year to year at Isle Royale. Contact the park for current information prior to your visit.

ACTIVITIES

Boating. The marina at Rock Harbor Lodge is open from late June to Labor Day. Most docks at the park will accommodate cruisers of moderate draft. Holding-tank pump-out stations are located at Mott Island and at Windigo. Boating regulations and marine weather forecasts can be obtained at headquarters and ranger stations. See notation on map regarding a navigation chart and a map.

Boat tours and rental boats and motors (no canoe rentals) are available at Rock Harbor Lodge and at Windigo. Water taxi service to campgrounds and trail heads is also available at Rock Harbor.

Hiking. Isle Royale has more than 160 miles of foot trails. Cross-country, off-trail travel is not recommended because of numerous boggy areas and dense vegetation. A number of combination trips—boat one way and hike the other—can be arranged with commercial boat operators.

Swimming is not recommended at Isle Royale because of the extremely cold water of Lake Superior and the leeches in the warmer inland lakes. Diving activities must be registered at a ranger station on a daily basis.

Camping. Isle Royale has 31 lakeside and trailside campgrounds, most having fireplaces, tables, and tent sites. Campsites cannot be reserved. Basic food staples, specialized camping foods, and white gas may be purchased at the Rock Harbor store or at Windigo. *All campers must obtain a camping permit.* In campgrounds, always use designated fireplaces. Camping outside of main campgrounds requires the use of gas or alcohol stoves. The use of hard fuels is prohibited.

Disposable items such as bottles, cans, and other non-burnables are prohibited in Isle Royale's back country.

Fishing. Michigan fishing regulations apply and a State license is required in all Lake Superior waters, but no license is required for Isle Royale's inland lakes or streams. Ranger stations have information on fishing and regulations. Equipment can be obtained at the Rock Harbor store or at Windigo. Guided fishing trips are offered at Rock Harbor. A free folder on fishing is available at all information and ranger stations.

Resource Protection. Destruction, injury, or removal of trees, flowers, birds, or other animals is prohibited. Removal of artifacts and geological specimens is also prohibited.

Lake Superior is the source of the park's drinking water. Therefore, dumping any foreign matter into Lake Superior or any of the park's inland lakes or streams is not allowed.

Isle Royale National Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is 87 North Ripley Street, Houghton, MI 49931, is in immediate charge.

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.

