

Canaveral / Merritt Island

Canaveral National Seashore
National Park Service

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Florida



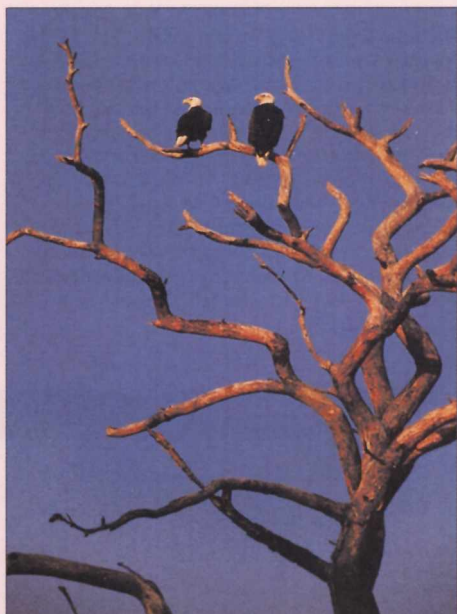
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Sheltering Spaces

Neither buildings nor seawalls disturb this wilderness beach on Florida's east coast. At both the national seashore and wildlife refuge, nature lives in harmony with human technology.



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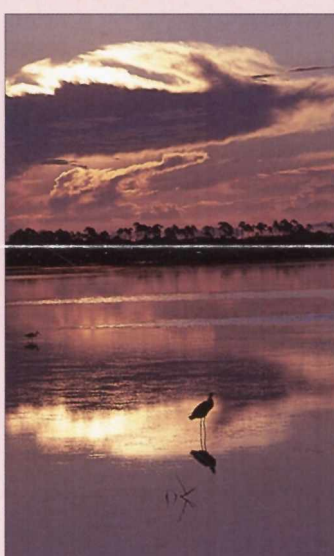


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Don't be surprised if you see a red-tailed hawk (above) or a bald eagle (top right) keeping watch over land and water.



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From isolated beaches and inland channels to life-filled marshes and lagoons (above), water takes command here.



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Guided by instinct, sea turtles struggle onto the protected beach to deposit eggs into nest cavities dug with their flippers.

Preserving Species

For many plants and animals found here, living at this national seashore and wildlife refuge means more than life as usual—it means life over extinction.

Mention Canaveral and Merritt Island and many people imagine space exploration—the exciting countdown, the thrilling liftoff. But another quality of space here is almost a secret from outsiders. This space can be secluded as gentle breezes caress miles of primitive beach or endangered sea turtles struggle from their leathery eggs. This space can also be boisterous, as tropical blossoms' aromas waft on humid air—and insects noisily approve.

This space has been preserved through the teamwork of three federal agencies. In the 1950s it was set aside to buffer activities of the nearby National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The space race gave the John F. Kennedy Space Center world prominence and ensured preservation of this barrier island. Working with NASA, the US Fish and Wildlife Service has managed Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge since 1963, and the National Park Service has run Canaveral National Seashore since 1975. These agencies care for this special area, where warm waters and a temperate climate nourish species as diverse as bald eagles and alligators or bromeliads and mangroves.

Winds and Atlantic waters massage the beach's sand grains into dunes that parallel the shore as far as you can see. Hidden in this graceful image is the buttress of a barrier island—a low-lying ribbon of land braced with a spine of sand dunes. Behind this protective island, salty Atlantic water flowing

through inlets combines with seasonal rains to form the Indian River and Mosquito Lagoon estuaries. Fish, oysters, clams, and shrimp begin life in these fertile nurseries, which, in turn, attract an abundance of waterfowl. Until the late 1950s the marshes also nurtured saltmarsh mosquitoes, which at times could produce a million mosquitoes per square yard in one day. Because saltmarsh mosquitoes don't lay eggs in fresh water, engineers divided 69,000 acres of marsh into walled impoundments to control water levels, salinity, and mosquitoes. The new environment attracted new residents, and today it is common to see waterfowl, alligators, otters, and wading birds like snowy egrets, white ibises, and great blue herons.

The barrier island and its waters offer sanctuary for an abundant mix of plants and animals. Recorded here are 1,045 plant species and 310 bird species. Hammocks of ancient oaks draped with Spanish moss grow near sand dunes covered with palmetto and sea oats. Thousands of migratory birds stop over on their journeys north and south. Over a dozen wildlife species federally listed as endangered or threatened include sea turtles, West Indian manatees, wood storks, eastern indigo snakes, and Florida scrub jays. Canaveral and Merritt Island form a sheltered space, where the countdown is not of spaceships but of endangered animals ensuring life for future generations.

Inviting Spaces

You may not see anyone else, but you will not be alone. Come share the warm sand with shorebirds and watch for other wildlife and flowers along quiet trails.



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An angler casts in early morning surf. Near-tropical water temperatures attract bluefish, whiting, and pompano, making sport fishing popular here.

At the Cruickshank observation tower on the refuge's wildlife drive you'll want your binoculars: The 310 bird species recorded here include wood storks and reddish egrets.



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Canaveral, this "place of canes" named by Spanish explorers, bears one of North America's oldest recorded place names. Surveyor Pedro Marratt probably named Merritt Island, charting it in the early 1800s. But human imprints were here long before European explorers put ashore. Earlier people, attracted by fertile estuaries and the temperate climate, harvested oysters and clams, discarding shells in heaps that archeologists study. These heaps (called middens or mounds) can be seen at Seminole Rest, Turtle Mound, and Castle Windy. In April 1513 Ponce de León's sailors claimed the land for Spain, and in 1763 the British took control of Florida's east coast. But vast wetlands, clashes with the Seminole, and clouds of saltmarsh mosquitoes delayed development until Douglas Dummett planted an orange grove in 1830, launching the Indian River citrus industry.

For the next century villages near citrus groves or water passages took hold briefly, then fell to

storms, isolation, or killing frosts. Eldora was a late-1800s town near Mosquito Lagoon. A lone house, Eldora State House, survives and is open to the public. Seminole Rest, where the Timucua people probably gathered and shelled clams, dates from 4,000 to 500 years ago. It's now 18 feet high. Early-1900s settlers who refused to sell its contents for road building thereby preserved its clues about Timucuan life. Exhibit panels along a half-mile trail convey more history of the mound.

Today this inviting space is yours to enjoy. Relax on a deserted beach or hike in forests of Spanish moss-draped live oaks. Scout, by boat, sail, or canoe, Indian River or explore Mosquito Lagoon for oysters, clams, pink shrimp, or blue crabs. And don't miss Black Point Wildlife Drive. Its six miles can take an hour or all day, depending on how many stops you make to view wildlife. Whether you seek solace or adventure, the national seashore and the wildlife refuge welcome you.

Enjoy the National Seashore and National Wildlife Refuge

Directions and Visitor Centers The national seashore and wildlife refuge are reached via US 1, I-95, and FL 528 (Beachline Expressway). *Northern access:* New Smyrna Beach is on FL A1A. Seminole Rest is east of US 1 in Oak Hill on River Road. *Southern access:* Titusville is on FL 406/402. Playalinda Beach is reached via FL 402. • The seashore has a seven-day entry fee and honors the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass series. • The seashore visitor center, seven miles south of New Smyrna Beach on FL A1A, offers exhibits, schedules, publications, and an orientation program. Call 386-428-3384. • The refuge visitor center, four miles east of Titusville on FL 402, offers exhibits, publications, and information. Call 321-861-0669.

Accessibility We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information go to a visitor center, ask a ranger, call the phone numbers above, or check the seashore and refuge websites.

Beaches The seashore has undeveloped beaches and limited services: no drinking water, food, picnic facilities, phones, or beach showers. • All beaches have restrooms and boardwalk access. • Playalinda and Apollo beaches are wheelchair-accessible. Ask at the entrance stations for current locations. • First aid and drinking water are at information centers. • The seashore allows surfing; the refuge does not. • You can get to Klondike Beach only by foot or bicycle. • Horses are allowed on a designated Apollo District beach section November 1 to April 15 (reservations, permit required). • Seashore areas may close if parking lots are full or for rocket launches at Kennedy Space Center. Call 321-867-4077 for launch closures at Playalinda Beach.



Scenic Drive The refuge's six-mile, self-guiding Scenic Point Wildlife Drive goes through pine flatwoods and impounded marsh for good views of many species of wildlife.

Hiking Both seashore and refuge offer short self-guiding trails. • Castle Windy and Turtle Mound trails take you by shell middens left by the Timucua people. • On Turtle Mound Trail you have views of the ocean and Mosquito Lagoon. • Eldora Hammock, Oak Hammock, and Palm Hammock trails go through dense hammock vegetation. • Cruickshank Trail has an observation tower and marsh views.

Camping Camping is allowed at the Apollo District at designated island sites all year (reservations, permit required). Camping is not allowed in the refuge. Nearby communities offer private campgrounds.

Hunting In season, the seashore and refuge allow hunting of migratory waterfowl, which is part of the refuge's waterfowl management. For firearms regulations ask a ranger or check the seashore and refuge websites.

Regulations and Safety Vehicles must stay on roads and park only in designated spaces. • Thieves target parking areas: Don't leave any valuables in vehicles. • Using remotely piloted aircraft like drones is prohibited. • Pets are prohibited on beaches and in public buildings and must be leashed at all times. • Picnicking—but no open fire—is permitted on beaches. Use portable grills and remove coals from the beach. • No vehicles, glass containers, or metal detectors are allowed on beaches. • Roller skating, inline skating, and skateboarding are prohibited. • Do not feed or harm wildlife, remove any vegetation, or disturb archeological sites—federal law protects all natural and cultural features.

Seashore Information and Permits
Canaveral National Seashore
212 S. Washington Ave.; Titusville, FL 32796
321-267-1110; www.nps.gov/cana

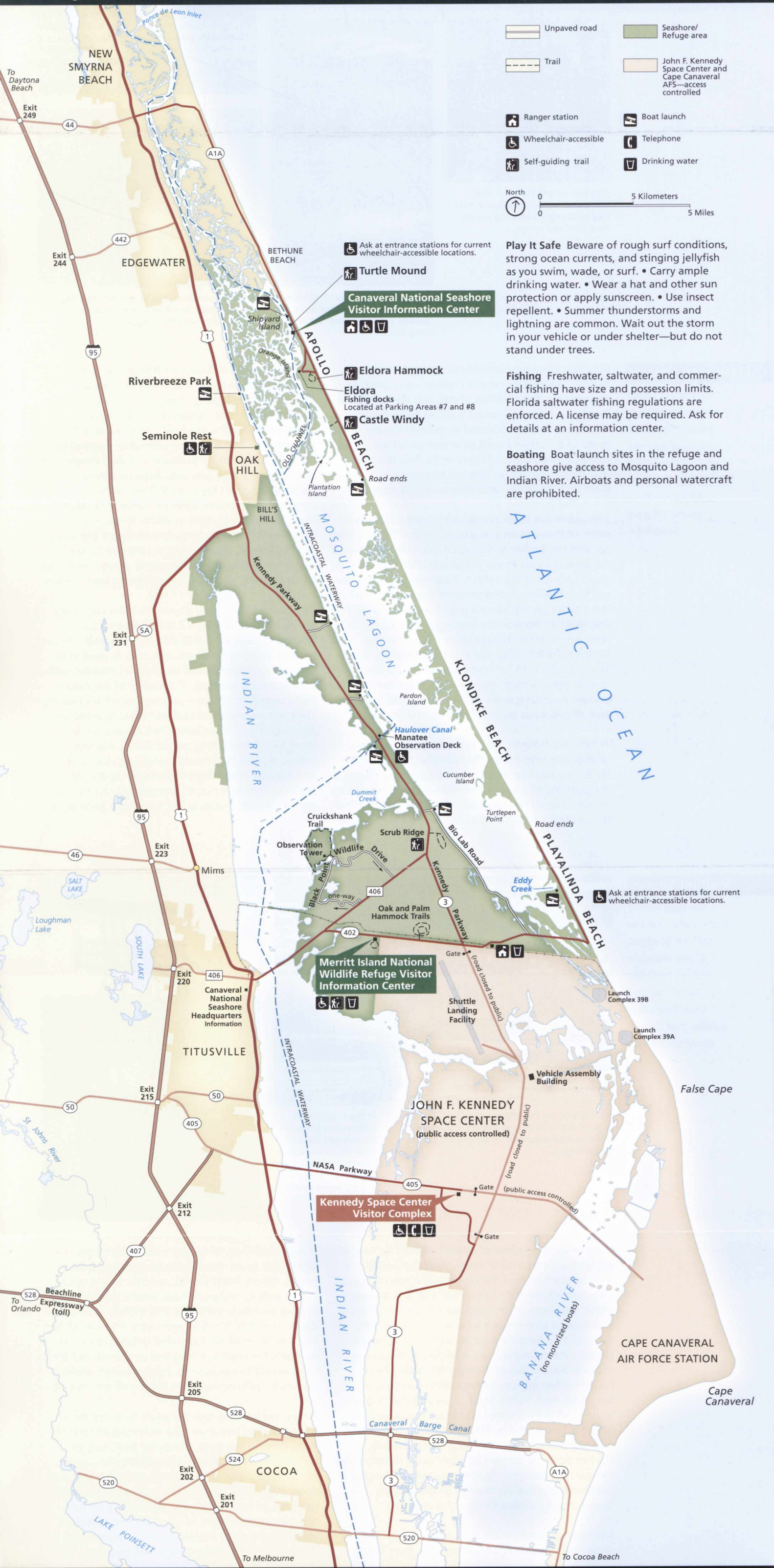
Refuge Information and Permits
Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge
PO Box 6504; Titusville, FL 32782
321-861-0669; www.fws.gov/merrittisland

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Getting Around



Play It Safe Beware of rough surf conditions, strong ocean currents, and stinging jellyfish as you swim, wade, or surf. • Carry ample drinking water. • Wear a hat and other sun protection or apply sunscreen. • Use insect repellent. • Summer thunderstorms and lightning are common. Wait out the storm in your vehicle or under shelter—but do not stand under trees.

Fishing Freshwater, saltwater, and commercial fishing have size and possession limits. Florida saltwater fishing regulations are enforced. A license may be required. Ask for details at an information center.

Boating Boat launch sites in the refuge and seashore give access to Mosquito Lagoon and Indian River. Airboats and personal watercraft are prohibited.