

Cumberland Island

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Seashore
Georgia



Islands on the Move

Cumberland is one in a string of narrow, sandy barrier islands just off the southeast coast of the United States. Formed by the rise and fall of sea level during the last ice ages, barrier islands are fragile and ever-changing. They move in response to tides, currents, and storms.

Barrier islands create rich habitats that are nurseries for many species. Marshes form between the mainland and barrier islands. These broad expanses of cordgrass and other salt-tolerant plants protect and nurture birds, fish, crustaceans, and turtles.



Beach

The sea advances and retreats twice daily, carving tide pools and patterns in the sand at the water's edge and undercutting, adding to, or moving dunes. Windblown sand buries shrubs and trees in the inter-dune area between beach and forest. Sea oats, a protected species, often grow on and stabilize dunes, but their root systems are easily damaged when trampled by people and animals.

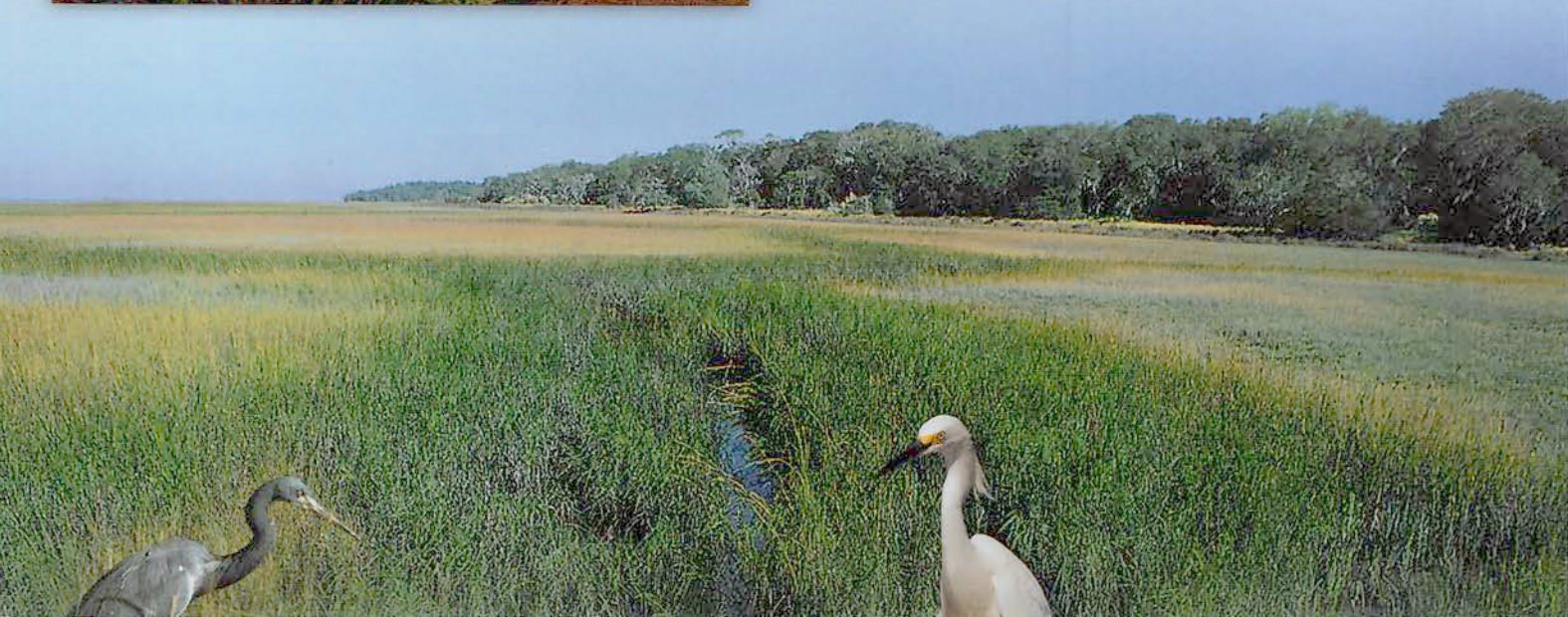
Watch sandpipers scampering along the water's edge and gulls soaring on ocean breezes. An osprey may dive into a wave to emerge seconds later, its talons grasping a mullet. Ancient loggerhead turtles, guided by instinct, lumber ashore at night to lay their eggs, and then return to the sea. Hatchlings emerge in 60 days, then scurry to the surf for protection.



Maritime Forest

Live oaks form a dense canopy that shelters palmettos and delicate ferns cradled in branches. Spanish moss, an epiphyte, sways in the breeze. Painted buntings, summer tanagers, cardinals, and pileated woodpeckers add color to the forest's palette. A casual stroll may reveal white-tailed deer, turkey, armadillo, and the occasional bobcat. Farther inland, on warm spring nights, rain-fed freshwater ponds host the booming courtship rites of bull alligators.

A wilderness area at the northern end of Cumberland Island encourages diversity of wildlife, plants, and trees, and allows people to find solitude. It also creates opportunities for education and scientific research.



Tri-colored heron

Saltwater Marsh

At low tide the saltwater marshes between Cumberland Island and St. Marys on the mainland resemble broad, tallgrass plains. Birds wade in grasses or feed at creek banks. Fiddler crabs scurry across the mud flats and eat decaying vegetation. Raccoons hunt for crabs and shellfish. At high tide, grasses sway with the current and disappear into it.

Snowy egret

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The cycle of twice-daily tides brings microscopic organisms and enriches the water with oxygen. Silt and debris carried into the marshes by inland rivers are flushed out to sea by ebb tides. Acre for acre, marshes are among Earth's most productive lands. Their nutrient wealth feeds fish, shellfish, plants, and birds, while grasses and shallow waters provide cover and protection for the young of many species.



Middens, Mansions, and a Settlement

Humans have been drawn to the island for thousands of years. Piles of shells—middens—offer clues to the early Timucuan people who left them. Of the early Spanish expeditions and missions, no traces remain. Defenses built by the British in the 1700s are now lost to time.

In 1803 Catharine Greene, widow of Revolutionary War hero Gen. Nathanael Greene, built Dungeness, a four-story 'tabby' mansion, near the southern end of the island. A century later,

Pittsburgh industrialist Thomas Carnegie and his wife Lucy purchased land on the island and built their own mansion, which they called Dungeness, in the same location (*above*). Several homes were built on the island for their children, including Plum Orchard, in 1898.

In the 1890s a small group of African American freedmen purchased property on the northern end of the island. The First African Baptist Church (1893; rebuilt 1937) is one of the settlement's few surviving structures.

Dungeness Ruins
PHOTOS NPS EXCEPT WHERE CREDITED

Explore Cumberland Island

Ferry A concessioner-operated passenger ferry serves the island from the visitor center in St. Marys, Georgia. The ferry does not carry cars, kayaks, or pets. Ferry schedules and days of operation change seasonally. Advance reservations are highly recommended and can be made up to six months ahead. To make ferry reservations and check schedules visit www.cumberlandislandferry.com or call 877-860-6787. If you miss the last ferry off the island, you must charter a boat to return.

Fees Fees are charged for ferry, entrance to Cumberland Island, and camping.

Supplies No supplies are available on the island. You must bring all your supplies with you. Water bottles can be refilled at several locations at the southern end of the island and at Plum Orchard Mansion. Wear sturdy walking shoes; bring rain gear, bug spray, and sun protection.

Camping All camping is limited to 7 days. Sea Camp and Stafford Beach campgrounds offer restrooms, cold showers, and fire rings. Dead-and-down wood may be used. Water must be treated at Stafford Beach.

Wilderness campsites—Brickhill Bluff, Yankee Paradise, and Hickory Hill—have no facilities. They are near wells, but the water must be treated. Campfires are not permitted at wilderness sites; bring portable stoves. You must have both a reservation and camping permit. Reserve at www.recreation.gov or call 877-444-6777.

Fishing and Hunting Georgia state fishing laws apply. During managed hunts the wilderness area is closed to the public.

Weather Cumberland Island winters are short and mild. Summer temperatures range from the 80s to low 90s°F. In summer, visit the beach early or late in the day and seek shade in midday heat.

Private Property Parts of Cumberland Island are privately owned. Respect the rights of landowners and do not trespass.

Safety and Regulations Dungeness ruins and outbuildings are closed to the public. • Check often and carefully for ticks; they can carry

disease. • No lifeguards; swim at your own risk. • Don't approach feral horses; they may kick and bite. • Feeding any wildlife is both prohibited and dangerous. • Watch for vehicles at beach and roadway crossings • For firearms regulations ask a ranger or check "Park Management" on our website.

Emergencies call 911

Bicycles Bicycles can be rented from concessioners, but are not allowed on trails or in the wilderness area. You may bring a bicycle on the ferry for an additional fee; call the ferry office for details.

Accessibility We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information go to the visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check our website.

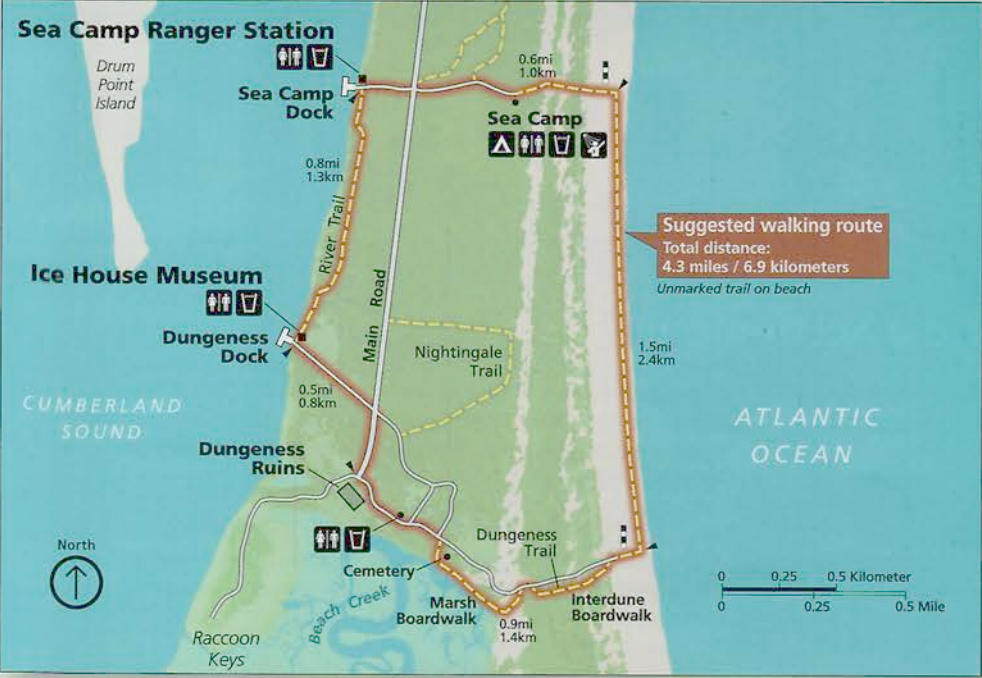
Cumberland Island National Seashore is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about national parks visit www.nps.gov.



Wilderness

Congress designated the Cumberland Island Wilderness in 1982 and it now has a total of 9,906 acres. For information about the National Wilderness Preservation System, visit www.wilderness.net.

Southend Loop Area



Southend Loop Walk Allow 3 to 4 hours for this walk through the natural and cultural landscapes of the island.

All beach crossings are signed and marked with a black and white pole. Stay on paths and use boardwalks when available. Do not climb on dunes. The Dungeness beach crossing is especially long. Take a full water bottle before you head to the beach. As you explore the area around Dungeness, watch for wildlife—many of Cumberland Island's animals are found here.

More Information
Cumberland Island National Seashore
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912-882-4336

National Park Foundation.
Join the park community.
www.nationalparks.org