



**United States
Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

America's Natural Resources

Created in 1849, the Department of the Interior—America's Department of Natural Resources—is concerned with the management, conservation, and development of the Nation's water, wildlife, mineral, forest, and park and recreational resources. It also has major responsibilities for Indian and territorial affairs.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department works to assure that nonrenewable resources are developed and used wisely, that park and recreational resources are conserved, and that renewable resources make their full contribution to the progress, prosperity, and security of the United States—now and in the future.

**padre
island**
NATIONAL SEASHORE • TEXAS



What is a National Seashore? As a unit of the National Park System, a National Seashore is an expanse of coastline that possesses qualities (scientific, scenic, and recreational) that have been judged to be of national significance, qualities so outstanding that the Congress of the United States, in passing an act signed by the President, has set the area aside so that it may be preserved and used by present and future generations.

Areas proposed for inclusion in the National Park System receive careful study. Qualified areas are then recommended to the Congress by the Secretary of the Interior. His recommendations are based on those he receives from the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments. This board is composed of 11 private citizens, each competent in one or more of the following fields: history, natural history, archeology, architecture, conservation, and recreation.

Once an area has been established as a National Seashore, what then? First, its preservation, unimpaired, will be assured. Second, its use will be so directed that visitors may enjoy it with the least possible disturbance of the natural conditions. On Padre Island, the delicate ecological balance will require careful planning and development lest visitors destroy what they came to enjoy. The National Park Service is charged with the responsibility of balancing preservation and use, a difficult problem that cannot be solved to the complete satisfaction of everyone. Personnel of the National Park Service are trained to reconcile these two objectives to provide for maximum enjoyment by present and future generations.



Size is only one of many qualities that distinguish Padre Island. Stretching for 113 miles along the Texas Gulf Coast from Corpus Christi on the north almost to Mexico on the south, the island ranges in width from a few hundred yards to about 3 miles. It is separated from the mainland by Laguna Madre, a shallow body of water with a maximum width of 10 miles. For several miles at each end of the island, there has been some development by the counties and private individuals. But the boundaries of the National Seashore encompass an uninhabited strip of coast 80.5 miles long and about as wide as the island itself—the longest undeveloped and uncluttered beach remaining in the contiguous United States. It is the largest of the Nation's four National Seashores.

Between the gulf and the lagoon lies first the wide clean beach of sand that in places gives way to small shells, next an alinement of sand dunes that reach heights as great as 40 feet, then grassy flats, and last a vaguely defined shoreline that seems to merge with the water of the lagoon.

To geologists, Padre Island is a textbook example of a barrier island, built by wave action and crowned by wind-formed sand dunes.

To biologists, Padre Island offers a rich field for study. The shell beaches on the gulf side testify to the abundance of marine snails, clams, and other mollusks. This part of the Gulf Coast is an important wintering region for waterfowl. Resident birds include white and brown pelicans, common and snowy egrets, little blue and great blue herons, gulls, and at least four species of terns. Among the more common mammals are jackrabbits, coyotes, and spotted ground squirrels. Although woody vegetation is restricted to a few groves of scrub live oak on the northern part of the island, the area is not without its interesting plants—seaoats, croton, morning-glory, beach evening-primrose, partridge-pea, and others.

To all visitors, the island offers the rhythmic beat of the surf, the cry of the gull, the singular fragrance borne by wind off the sea, mile upon mile of firm wet beaches to walk along, dunes of clean dry sand, and rarest of all, the inspiring solitude of isolated beach and sea.

This is a place to sit quietly and watch the wild creatures: inquisitive ghost crabs, swift-running shore birds, graceful pelicans winging their way a few feet above the water, and that greatest of all flyers—seldom seen but never forgotten—the magnificent frigate-bird.

This is also a place to fish. Surf fishing in the gulf yields redfish, seatrout, black drum, and other species. Guides and boats are available in nearby cities and towns, presenting opportunities for catching tarpon, mackerel, sailfish, and snapper.

At about the same latitude as south Florida, Padre Island has the climate for year-round outdoor recreation: cool gulf breezes in summer and warm sunshine in winter. The average January temperature is 57°, and the average July temperature is 83°; thus, the island is cooler than much of the Southwest in summer and warmer than much of the United States in winter. "Northerners" sometimes chill the coast, but they are usually short lived. The orange and grapefruit groves of the noted Lower Rio Grande Valley are but a short distance from the southern end of the island.

Padre Island is a gateway to Mexico. The southern tip, near Brownsville, Tex., and the Mexican city of Matamoros, is only 650 miles from Mexico City by paved highway.

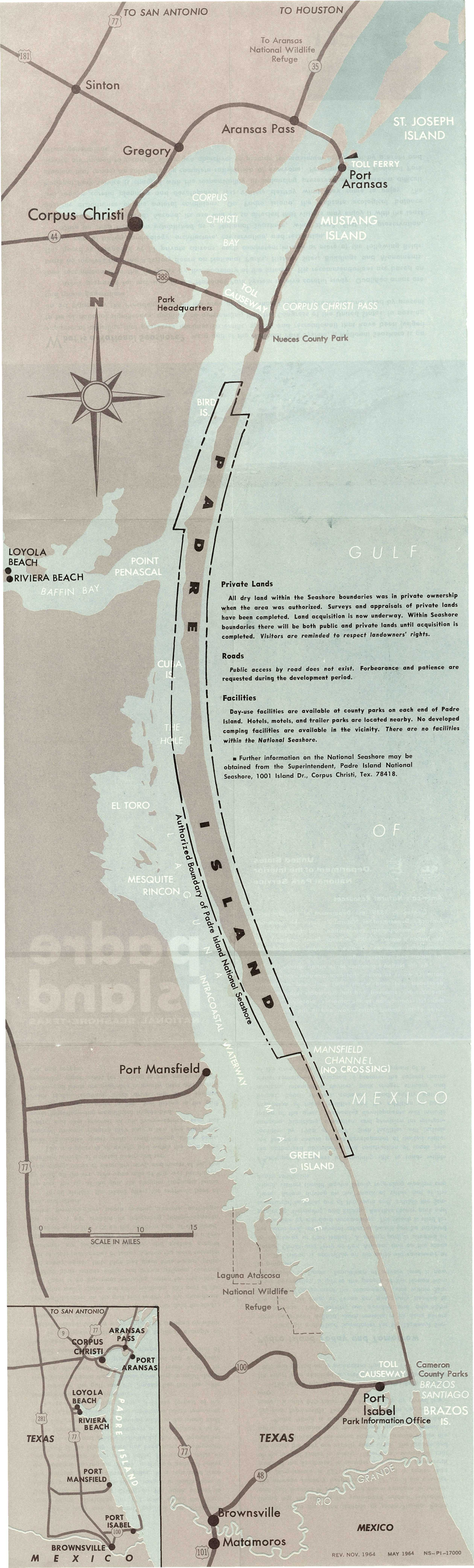
The island was named for Padre Nicolas Balli, a Spanish priest who obtained sovereign right to the island about 1800 and grazed cattle and horses there.

Padre Island Today and Tomorrow

Although authorized boundaries for the National Seashore have been defined, much remains to be done before the National Park Service can develop and administer the area. The State of Texas has generously deeded to the Federal Government the submerged lands within Seashore boundaries, a gift to the people of the Nation from the people of Texas. Acquisition of private land is now in progress.

The island is accessible on the north via causeway at Corpus Christi and ferry at Port Aransas and on the south by causeway at Port Isabel. A county park is situated at the north end, and several miles of beach can be traveled at low tide by standard automobiles. The beach is used for picnicking, swimming, and fishing. Another county park and commercial facilities are at the south end, outside the Seashore. Before driving on the beach at either end of the island, visitors should inquire locally regarding weather and beach conditions.

Anticipated progress in acquiring title to lands within the authorized boundaries and construction of roads into the Seashore should permit development of limited visitor facilities by 1966 or 1967. Such facilities will include camping, picnicking, sanitation, and provision for interpretation of the area. Succeeding developments will include expansion of these facilities and the addition of bathhouses, beach shelters, cabanas, beach safety patrols, marinas, interpretive devices, park ranger stations and visitor centers—all designed to preserve the natural charm of the area while increasing visitors' enjoyment of it.



Private Lands

All dry land within the Seashore boundaries was in private ownership when the area was authorized. Surveys and appraisals of private lands have been completed. Land acquisition is now underway. Within Seashore boundaries there will be both public and private lands until acquisition is completed. Visitors are reminded to respect landowners' rights.

Roads

Public access by road does not exist. Forbearance and patience are requested during the development period.

Facilities

Day-use facilities are available at county parks on each end of Padre Island. Hotels, motels, and trailer parks are located nearby. No developed camping facilities are available in the vicinity. There are no facilities within the National Seashore.

Further information on the National Seashore may be obtained from the Superintendent, Padre Island National Seashore, 1001 Island Dr., Corpus Christi, Tex. 78418.