

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 oaks, 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.



Saltwater Marsh

As low tides, the saltwater marshes between Cumberland Island and the mainland create a unique habitat. Tall grasses, plants, trees, shrubs, and grasses or feed as creek banks. Fiddler crabs scurry among the mud flats and eat decaying vegetation. Riverbank hound for grass and shellfish. At high tide, grasses sway with the current and disappear into it.

Snowy egret

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.



Explore Cumberland Island

Ferry: A concessionaire operates a passenger ferry service to 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-end-dump word may be used. Water must be treated at Stafford Beach.

Wilderness: Campsites—Breakfast Bluff, Seaside Beach, and Hickory Hill—have no facilities. They are well-ventilated, 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 visitors@cblm.gov or call 877-860-6777.

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: Dangerous ruins and outcroppings are closed to the public. Check often and carefully for ticks. They can carry

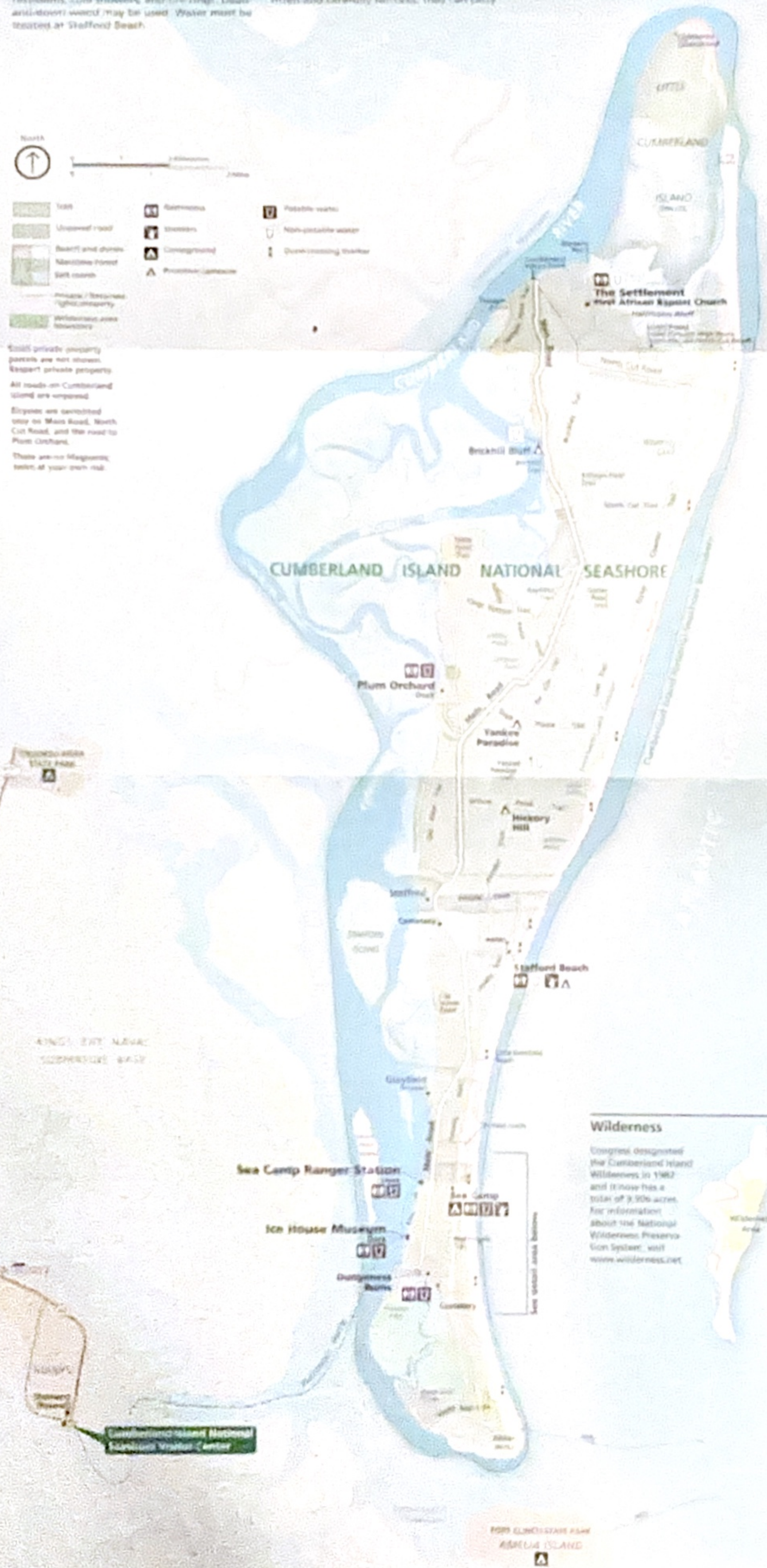
disease. • No firearms, swim at your own risk. • Do not approach fetal horses; they may kick and bite. • Feeding any wildlife is both prohibited and dangerous. • Watch for vehicles at beach and roadway crossings. • For firearms regulations see a ranger or check "Park Management" on our website.

Emergencies call 911

Bicycles: Bicycles can be rented from concessionaires, 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.

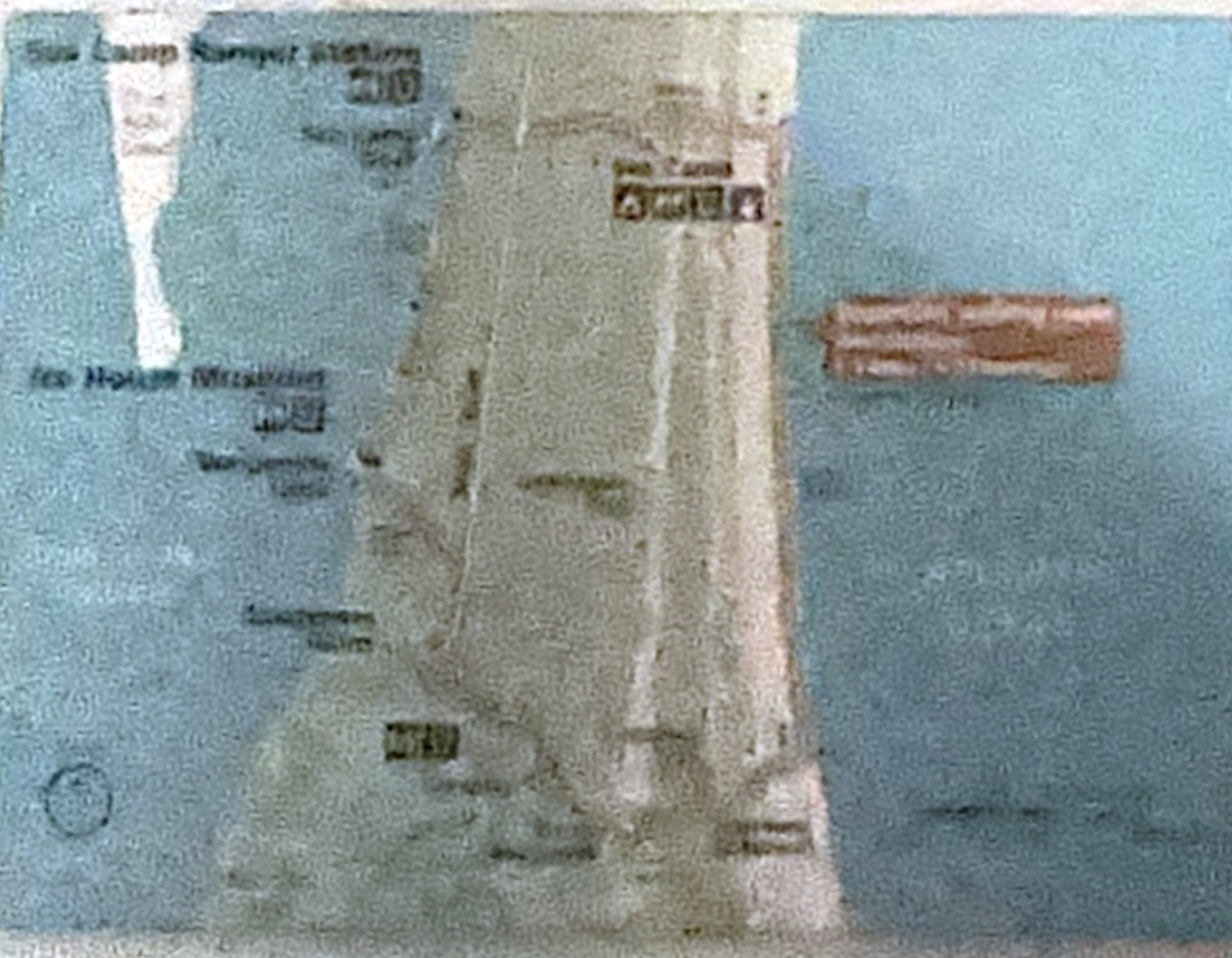
Cumberland Island National Seashore is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about national parks visit www.nps.gov.



Wilderness

Designated the Cumberland Island Wilderness in 1982 and it now has a total of 3,900 acres. For information about the National Wilderness Preservation System, visit www.wilderness.net.

Southeast Loop Area



Southeast 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 Oatgeness beach crossing is especially long. Take a full water bottle before you reach the beach. As you explore the area around Oatgeness, watch for wild life—many of Cumberland Island's animals are found here.

More information: Cumberland Island National Seashore, 121 Winder St., St. Marys, GA 31788. www.cumberlandislandferry.com or 877-860-6787.

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