

Southeast Florida

# Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park

*Fifteen minutes from downtown Miami, but a world apart*

## Real Fun in the Real Florida

Just 15 minutes from downtown Miami, and voted "One of the Top Ten Beaches in the U.S.," Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park offers visitors recreational opportunities in a tropical paradise. With more than 1.2 miles of Atlantic shoreline and 1.4 miles fronting Biscayne Bay, it is one of the most popular parks in Florida.

## Swimming & Fishing

Cape Florida's Atlantic shoreline attracts **swimmers** and **sunbathers** from around the world. The historic Cape Florida lighthouse overlooks the park and is open for tours. The scenic Biscayne Bay side of the park draws visitors to the sea wall, where **fishing** is a popular pastime.

## **Biking & Hiking**

In the middle of the park, a paved pedestrian/ bike path allows **cyclists** and **skaters** to enjoy the native plant communities restored to their former glory. **Nature trails** permit people to observe the diversity of plants and wildlife at a slower pace.

## **Picnicking & Rentals**

Four **picnic** areas offer tables, barbecue grills and 18 covered shelters. There are excellent open-air restaurants, The Lighthouse Café near the beach and Boater's Grill at No Name Harbor. The park's concession offers a variety of rentals, including bicycles, kayaks, beach chairs and umbrellas.

## **Camping**

No typical camping is available, but overnight **boat anchoring** is allowed in the harbor, and a primitive campsite is available for organized youth groups.

## History & Nature

Ponce de Leon named this area "Cape of Florida" when he led the first Spanish expedition to Florida in 1513.

The Cape Florida lighthouse, the park's best known feature, was completed in 1825 but was damaged during the Second Seminole War. The rebuilt tower, completed in 1846, remains the oldest standing structure in Miami-Dade County. Tours of the 95-foot lighthouse and the keeper's house museum are available.

The island served as a secret meeting place and port for runaway slaves and Black Seminoles waiting to rendezvous with sea captains or board dugouts for a passage to safety in the British Bahamas. Although the lighthouse was built to save lives and ships, its unflinching light brought an end to this avenue of escape. In September 2004, Cape Florida was designated a National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Site.

In 1992, Hurricane Andrew uprooted a forest of non-native Australian-pine trees that dominated the landscape and left the park nearly treeless.

The storm provided land managers the opportunity to restore the park's native plant communities. Today, a variety of natural habitats, from mangrove forest to maritime hammock, can be seen at Cape Florida.

Depending upon the season, more than 50 butterfly species and 170 bird species may be seen at the park. The peregrine falcon, piping plover and American crocodile regularly take refuge here. Loggerhead sea turtles nest along the beach each summer. Green sea turtles and Florida manatees often graze in the seagrass beds offshore.

## **Directions**

The park is located on the southern end of Key Biscayne, south of downtown Miami.

## **Park Guidelines**

- Hours are 8 a.m. until sunset, 365 days a year.
- An entrance fee is required. Additional user fees may apply.

- The collection, destruction or disturbance of plants, animals or park property is prohibited.
- Pets are permitted in designated areas only. Pets must be kept on a leash no longer than 6 feet and well behaved at all times.
- Fishing, boating, swimming and fires are allowed in designated areas only. A Florida fishing license may be required.
- Fireworks and hunting are prohibited in all Florida state parks.
- Alcoholic beverage consumption is allowed in designated areas only.
- Florida's state parks are committed to providing equal access to all facilities and programs. Should you need assistance to enable your participation, please contact the ranger station.

## **Contact Information**

Florida State Parks  
Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Page 6 of 6

Division of Recreation and Parks

**Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park**

1200 South Crandon Boulevard

Key Biscayne, FL 33149

(305) 361-5811

[FloridaStateParks.org](http://FloridaStateParks.org)