

Southwest Florida

Don Pedro Island State Park

Peace and solitude along the Gulf of Mexico

Real Fun in the Real Florida

Don Pedro Island is part of a chain of barrier islands extending along the Gulf Coast. Between Knight Island and Little Gasparilla Island, Don Pedro is accessible only by private boat. Boaters can tie up at the dock on the mangrove-lined, bay side of the island.

Recreational activities include year-round **swimming** in the Gulf of Mexico, as well as **sunbathing, fishing** and **shelling**. Docks are available for day use and are provided for visitors who enjoy **boating** and fishing.

A **picnic pavilion, tables, grills** and a restroom are available on the island.

Visitors may cruise to the park on their own watercraft or contact a ferry service at (941) 697-8825.

The land base has a **fishing dock**, **nature trails** and a **picnic shelter**. Paddlers can bring their **kayaks** and **canoes** and launch into Lemon Bay, with a short portage from the parking lot.

To become a park volunteer and/or to join the Barrier Island Parks Society, Inc., call (941) 964-0060.

History & Nature

For thousands of years Native Americans lived in and around Charlotte Harbor. During the 1700s and 1800s, Spanish fisherman fished the area waters. After years of changing ownership, Don Pedro Island was sold to Cavanaugh Community Corp. in 1969. They built the pavilion and docks on the southeastern portion of the island. In 1985, the property was purchased by the State. The Don Pedro Land Base, acquired in 1999, adds about 100 acres of recreational opportunities to the park.

There are ten natural communities in this 230-acre park. Behind the shoreline is a beach dune community populated with sea oats. The most noticeable beach inhabitants are a variety of

shorebirds, including gulls, terns, plovers and sandpipers. Visitors might see endangered animals such as West Indian manatees, gopher tortoises, bald eagles and American oystercatchers. On summer nights during nesting season, female loggerhead sea turtles crawl onto the upper beach and deposit their eggs in nests they have dug at the foot of the sand dunes.

The coastal grassland community occupies the middle of the island where salt-tolerant herbs, grasses and shrubs blend with the sea oats. On the eastern uplands of the island a maritime hammock of hardwood trees is beginning to establish itself. This is a harsh environment where the stunted trees rarely reach ten feet in height.

The land base encompasses mesic flatwoods and a marine tidal swamp. The mesic flatwoods community is made up of South Florida slash pine with an understory of palmetto, grasses and shrubs that provide habitat for rabbits, raccoons, woodpeckers and owls.

Directions

The island is accessible only by private boat. Dock on the bay side via a channel from the Intracoastal Waterway at green marker #35. The channel is only 2.5 feet deep. Enter at idle speed. The land base is located on the Cape Haze Peninsula. Take U.S. 41 to State Road 776 to Englewood. Take Placida Road (County Road 775) 7 miles south of State Road 776.

Park Guidelines

- Hours of operation are 8 a.m. until sunset, 365 days a year.
- An entrance fee is required. Additional user fees may apply.
- All plants, animals and park property are protected, including sand dollars and shellfish.
- Pets are permitted in designated areas only and must be kept on a hand-held 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.
- Alcoholic beverage consumption is prohibited except in designated areas.
- Become a volunteer. Inquire at the ranger station.
- For information about joining Barrier Island Parks Society, Inc., call (941) 964-0060.
- 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
Division of Recreation and Parks
Don Pedro Island State Park

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c/o Gasparilla Island State Park

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