

Northwest Florida

St. Joseph Peninsula State Park

*A Sweeping Landscape of Towering Dunes and
Untamed Wilderness*

Real Fun in the Real Florida

Welcome to St. Joseph Peninsula State Park on the Gulf of Mexico between Apalachicola and Port St. Joe, where visitors can swim, sun and play on 9.5 miles of snow-white sand beaches lapped by clear, aqua-blue waters.

Visitors can explore the untouched natural beauty of the *Wilderness Preserve* or fish and snorkel in the gulf or tranquil grass flats of St. Joseph Bay.

Real Fun in St. Joseph Peninsula State Park offers a variety of **camping** facilities, 120 campsites with water, electricity, picnic table and grills. A special tent area is available for **youth groups** and eight cabins are furnished with kitchens, fireplaces, bathrooms, heat and air. For a primitive experience, campers can **hike** or **kayak** into the *Wilderness Preserve*.

Daytime visitors can enjoy **picnicking, beach activities** and **boat ramp access** to St. Joseph Bay. **Fishing** and **snorkeling** are great ways to enjoy the abundant marine life in the gulf and bay. Favorite catches include whiting, pompano, blue crabs and bay scallops.

Hike along the gulf beach, bay shore and interior passageways of **nature trails** to observe the park's wildlife and natural beauty. A map of the preserve is available at the entrance station.

The park is noted as an excellent birding area with sightings of 243 species recorded. During fall migration the peninsula is an important stopover point for a variety of species. It is a premier location for observing raptors and neotropicals with **birding tours** offered each October as part of the *Florida Panhandle Birding and Wildflower Festival*.

History & Nature

Native Americans were the first to enjoy the beauty and bounty of St. Joseph Bay. The peninsula was settled by hunter-gatherers of the Weeden Island and Mississippian, Fort Walton Cultures. Remains of shell tools and pottery of these cultures have been found in the park.

Spanish explorers named St. Joseph Bay in the early 1500s, but did not settle here until 1701 when they built a fort, Presidio San Jose, and a mission at the tip of the peninsula. After a few years the settlers abandoned the fort and returned to Pensacola. Nothing remains of the settlement today.

As the Florida Panhandle became an important part of shipping routes in the 1800s, settlers from Apalachicola moved here hoping to establish a competing port. St. Joseph's Point Lighthouse was built on the peninsula in 1839 to serve the shortlived town of St. Joseph across the bay. After the town's population was decimated by yellow fever in 1841, the lighthouse was dismantled.

In 1868, the Stone family purchased much of the land surrounding the bay, including the peninsula. They sold it to the U. S. government in 1940 to use for military training. St. Joseph Peninsula State Park opened in 1967. It was dedicated to the former owner, T. H. Stone, a respected community leader in Gulf County.

Directions

From Port St. Joe, Hwy. 98 to SR 30A; go 7 miles; turn right on Cape San Blas Rd. From Apalachicola, take Hwy. 98 to CR 30A; go 12 miles; turn left on Cape San Blas Rd. Travel 10 miles to park.

Park Guidelines

- Hours are 8 a.m. until sunset, 365 days a year.
- An entrance fee is required.
- All plants, animals and park property are protected. Collection, destruction or disturbance 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.
- Become a volunteer. Inquire at the ranger station.

- For camping information, contact Reserve America at (800) 326-3521 or (866) I CAMP FL or TDD (888) 433-0287 or visit ReserveAmerica.com.
- 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
St. Joseph Peninsula State Park
8899 Cape San Blas Road
Port St. Joe, Florida 32456
(850) 227-1327
FloridaStateParks.org