

## Nature & History

The park was created to protect and preserve a portion of the only living coral reef in the continental United States. The park extends three miles into the Atlantic Ocean, is approximately 21 miles in length and is adjacent to the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

The park is named for one of the early proponents of the preservation of its reef, John D. Pennekamp. Pennekamp was a Miami newspaper editor who also helped establish Everglades National Park.

The park contains a wide variety of tropical vegetation, shorebirds and marine life. The coral reefs are among the most beautiful and diverse of all living communities. Coral reefs are made of tiny animals called polyps. Stony corals, such as star coral and brain coral, secrete a limestone skeleton around their bodies. These skeletons remain after death and provide the foundation for new polyp growth. Octocorals, such as sea fans and sea plumes, are flexible and sway gracefully in the ocean current as they feed on plankton.

Sponges, shrimps, crabs, turtles, lobsters and hundreds of species of fish live among the corals. These reefs occur only in shallow oceans having clear, warm waters. It took approximately 5,000 years for this coral reef to form.

At the reef, snorkelers delight in seeing many colorful tropical fish and corals. Anglers can fish for a wide variety of species in diverse habitats.

Touching or standing on corals may kill them and is therefore prohibited. Anglers will need a saltwater fishing license. Spearfishing is prohibited. Collection of tropical fish is not allowed. No lobster may be harvested from or within any coral formation.

## Florida State Parks

Florida Department of Environmental Protection  
Division of Recreation and Parks

### John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park

U.S. 1 Mile Marker 102.5  
Key Largo, Florida 33037  
(305) 451-1202

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

## 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 six feet and well behaved at all times.
- Fishing, boating, swimming and fires are allowed in designated areas only. A Florida saltwater fishing license is required unless exempt by law. Snorkelers and scuba divers should always use Diver-Down flags when in the water.
- 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.

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**FLORIDA**  
**State Parks**  
*...the Real Florida*<sup>SM</sup>  
Created on 7/14



**John Pennekamp**  
**Coral Reef**  
**State Park**

America's first undersea park



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*...the Real Florida*<sup>SM</sup>



**National Gold Medal Winner**

Florida State Parks - "America's First Three-Time Winner"



## Real Fun in ...the Real Florida<sup>SM</sup>

John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park is the first undersea park in the United States, and encompasses approximately 70 nautical square miles. Located in the fabulous Florida Keys, the park's upland areas offer visitors a unique experience in the mangrove swamps and tropical hammocks. Most visitors, however, are drawn to the park by the coral reefs and their associated marine life. Many enjoy the view from a glass-bottom boat tour; but visitors can also get even closer by scuba diving or snorkeling.

The **Visitor Center** features a 30,000-gallon saltwater **aquarium**, nature exhibits and a theater showing nature videos. Nature walks are available along the **Mangrove**, **Wild Tamarind** and **Grove** trails. A 2.5-mile canoe trail winds through the mangrove swamp. **Canoe and kayak rentals** are available.

Underwater at Cannon Beach, artifacts from a 1715 Spanish shipwreck, featuring an anchor and cannons, may be viewed. Marine life, including crabs and fish, may be observed in the seagrass beds.

**Picnic tables** and grills are located throughout the park. Pavilions are free on a first-come basis, but may be reserved by paying a fee at least 24 hours in advance. Contact the ranger station at (305) 451-1202. Lunch items, gifts and snorkeling equipment may be obtained at the concession.

Reservations are strongly recommended for RVers and tent campers who wish to stay in the **campground**. Contact Reserve America at (800) 326-3521 or visit ReserveAmerica.com. A group campsite may also be reserved by contacting the ranger station.



**Trips** to the coral reef are conducted daily aboard a high-speed, stable, air-conditioned, **glass-bottom catamaran**. Daily **snorkeling** and **scuba** boat trips are also offered. Call (305) 451-6300 for more information and reservations for boat trips. Instruction for becoming a certified diver is available by calling the dive shop at (305) 451-6322.

A boat ramp and **motorboat rentals** are available at the marina. Marina slips and Largo Sound moorings may be rented overnight. Contact the dockmaster at (305) 451-6325. To protect the coral, day-use moorings are provided as an alternative to anchoring at the reef.

