



Kayaking Regulations and Safety—Eastern Santa Cruz Island

Kayaking is a unique and rewarding way to experience the pristine marine environment of eastern Santa Cruz Island. Here you will encounter spectacular displays of wildlife. The island’s cliffs, their numerous caves and the rest of the coastline and neighboring islets are home to 8 of the 17 breeding species of seabirds and shorebirds, including ashy storm-petrels, Scripps’s murrelets, Brandt’s and pelagic cormorants, Cassin’s auklets, western gulls, pigeon gillmots and black oystercatchers. Santa Cruz, the other Channel Islands, and all their associated islets and offshore rocks comprise one of the largest breeding centers on the west coast for seabirds and shorebirds. California sea lion and harbor seals also rest and breed throughout the island’s shoreline.

The protection and preservation of these rare and unique marine resources is a major mission of the National Park Service. By following the wildlife-specific regulations listed below, you can help protect these park treasures for future generations to enjoy.

Also, within this marine environment you will face new challenges and may encounter unexpected dangers. Since the marine environment can be unforgiving, follow the safety information listed below and use extra caution when engaging in these activities.

This bulletin is designed specifically to help in planning a safe, enjoyable, and environmentally sound sea kayak trip in the park. For more information on kayaking in the park including planning your trip, weather, safety, and other park regulations please visit nps.gov/chis.

Regulations

In addition to the regulations listed below, visitors should follow the “Limiting Your Impact” guidelines listed on the park website and must comply with all regulations in Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and the Superintendent’s Compendium. Visit nps.gov/chis/ for a complete list of regulations and guidelines.

As in all national parks, natural and cultural resources are protected under federal law. *Visitors may not collect, harass, feed or otherwise harm the native wild-life, plant life or other natural and cultural resources* of Channel Islands National Park. These include, but are not limited to, vegetation, animals, rocks, shells, feathers and other natural, archeological, and historic features within the park.

Under federal law it is illegal to feed, touch, tease, frighten or intentionally disturb wildlife, including seabirds, seals and sea lions. They are very sensitive to any type of human disturbance, especially during nesting and pupping seasons. [Title 36CFR 2.2 (a)(2)]

Do not directly or indirectly feed the native wildlife. Wildlife can become habituated to human food by being fed. Once habituated, these animals will beg for food, becoming nuisances to visitors. In addition, habituated animals may bite and transmit diseases, and may consume plastics which obstruct their digestive systems, causing them to starve. *Secure your food and garbage* at all times. [Title 36CFR 2.2 (a)(2)]

To protect wildlife, *landing is prohibited on all offshore rocks and islets* . [Superintendent’s Compendium 36 CFR 1.5 (a)(1)]

Visitors may not set foot ashore inside sea caves, including, but not limited to ledges and beaches. [Superintendent’s Compendium 36 CFR 1.5 (a)(2)]

The shoreline between Arch Point (northwest of Scorpion Anchorage) and the east boundary of Potato Harbor is closed to landing to protect nesting seabirds. [Superintendent’s Compendium 36CFR 1.5 (a)(1)]

Marine Reserves are closed to fishing. The area between Scorpion Rock and Potato Harbor from the shoreline out to 6 nautical miles is a Marine Reserve— the take of living, geological, or cultural resources is prohibited. Please visit nps.gov/chis or talk to a ranger for more information on marine reserves.

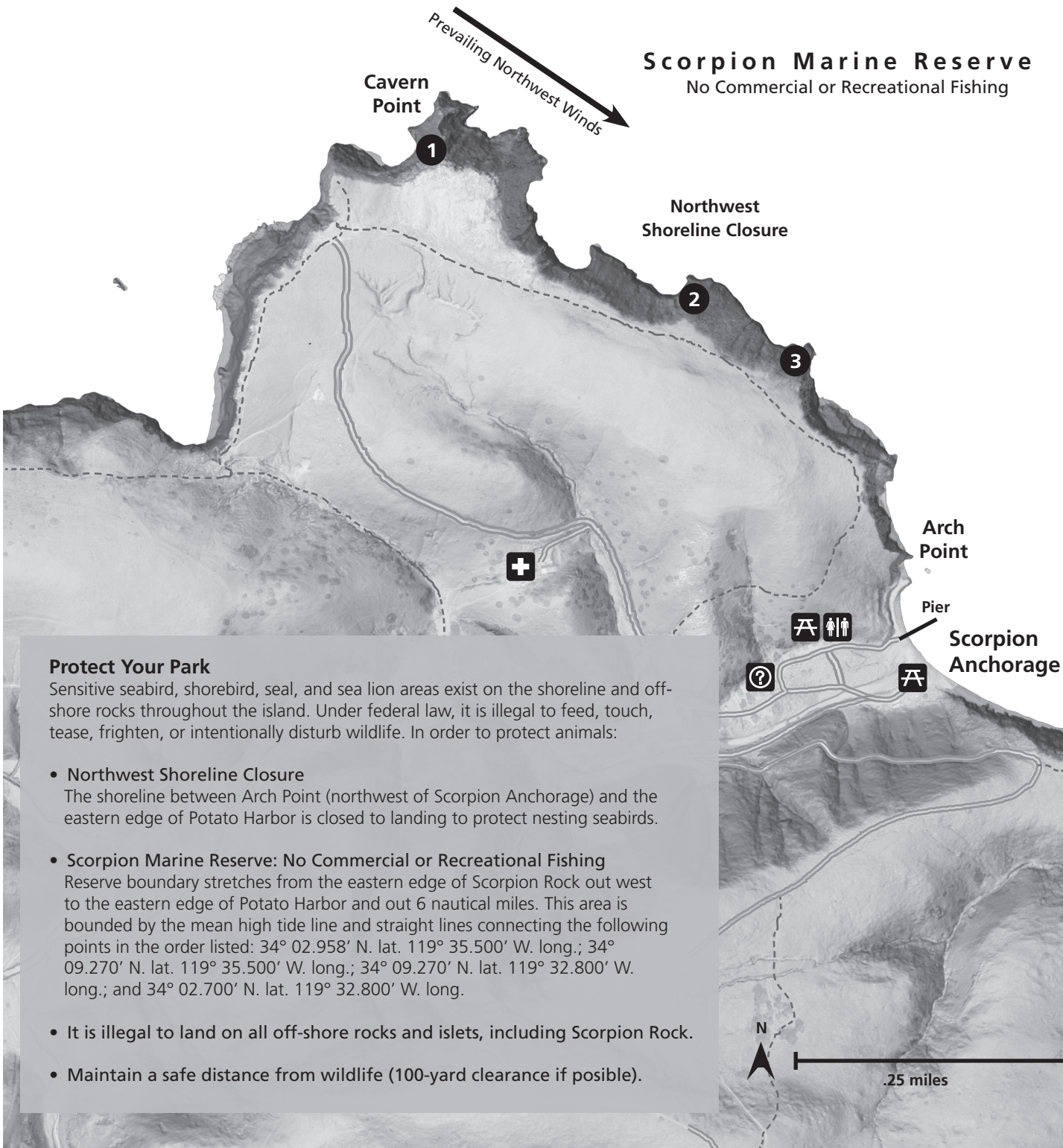
Safety

No lifeguards on duty.
All watersports are at your own risk. Use the buddy system.

Open ocean conditions.
You are not in a protected cove. Be alert to wind, waves, and currents at all times.

- Weather and Sea Conditions**
- Always observe and evaluate sea conditions before entering the water. Check marine weather forecast for the East Santa Barbara Channel in advance.
 - Extreme weather conditions may be encountered at any time. Sea conditions may become dangerous without warning.
 - Wind and waves typically come out of the northwest or west and increase in the afternoon. Morning hours can be a better time for waterports. Santa Ana or east winds may occur at anytime, but are most common September - April.
 - Do not travel down wind (with the wind) as you will have to return into a headwind. If you find yourself unable to get back to Scorpion, there are two small beach haul outs at Little Scorpion.
 - Ocean currents outside of coves and protected beach areas can be strong and extremely dangerous.
- Skills**
- Do not exceed your skill level. If you are new to sea kayaking or other watersports, it is recommended that you go with a guide service. Stay close to Scorpion Anchorage. Ask NPS personnel or kayak guides if you have questions concerning weather, safety, regulations, or destinations.
 - Be capable of re-entering your kayak from the water.

- Use the buddy system. Stay together and conduct your watersports within the skills of the least experienced member in the group.
- Equipment**
- All kayakers must have lifejackets.
 - Helmets are highly recommended. Always wear a helmet when below cliffs and in sea caves.
 - VHF radio, tow line, compass, throw bag, first aid kit. Carry these items with you and know how to use them.
 - Wetsuits are highly recommended. Water temperatures remain cold throughout the year (55 to 70 degrees). Wear a wetsuit.
 - Establish a plan. Let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return.
 - Post the dive flag at end of pier when swimming, snorkeling, and scuba diving. Do not attempt to enter or exit the water from the pier when boats are in the pier area.
- Sea Caves**
- Sea caves are dangerous. Even on calm days, the wake from large ships in the channel can pose a danger in caves.
 - Use extreme caution. Always observe and evaluate sea conditions before entering any sea cave.
 - It is illegal and unsafe to exit your kayak while in the sea caves.
- Emergency Procedures**
- Contact a ranger, nearby boat, US Coast Guard (VHF 16), or call the National Park Dispatch Center at 559-565-4221.



Kayaking Destinations		
Destination (from Scorpion Beach)	Distance (one-way)	Description
1 Cavern Point Cave	.8 miles	This magnificent cave with colorful lichen and algae is the deepest in the area. Exposed to predominant west wind and waves. Expect larger waves and stronger winds when approaching.
2 Seal Beach Cave	.5 miles	Massive cave with a large rock beach at the back. Used by harbor seals as a winter-spring haul-out. Landing is prohibited. DO NOT enter this cave if marine mammals are present.
3 Elephant's Belly Cave	.3 miles	East-facing opening passes through to a much larger west-facing opening. Watch for shallow boulders. Be mindful of swell and low tides. The narrow outer archway has extremely sharp walls and is subject to unexpected surges.
4 L Cave	.3 miles	Tall north-facing opening passes through to a small east-facing opening surrounded by a stunning kelp-filled rock garden. Watch for shallow boulders around the east opening. Be mindful of swell and low tides.
5 Scorpion Rock Cave "Green Room"	.5 miles	Sunlight creates a majestic green glow inside. Large west-facing opening funnels wind and swell towards the tight east-facing opening creating hazardous conditions in the back chamber. Walls are covered in sharp barnacles. DO NOT enter when birds are nesting (February to June).
6 Little Scorpion Beach West "Boatwreck Beach"	.5 miles	Pristine sandy beach inside a small secluded cove. Accessible at lower tides. Subject to surges and waves from several directions. May hike cross-country back to Scorpion Anchorage from these beaches in case of an emergency.
7 Little Scorpion Beach East	.7 miles	Beautiful rocky beach inside a protected cove. Subject to east winds and swell, which can cause breaking waves. May hike cross-country back to Scorpion Anchorage from these beaches in case of an emergency.