



Park Regulations



Welcome to the Park

Welcome to Dry Tortugas National Park! This is a special place, and requires care from all who visit. The following is a summary of those regulations most important to park visitors. These regulations are necessary for protecting the fragile natural and historical features within Dry Tortugas National Park, and for ensuring your safety. When in doubt, ask park staff for additional information. Have a safe and enjoyable visit!

Public Use Areas and Closures

Fort Jefferson and Garden Key

The fort interior is open sunrise to sunset. Pets, food, and drinks, are not permitted inside the fort. Service and residential areas are closed to the public. The moat is closed to all entries and activities. The Special Protection Zones for shark breeding and corals on the east and southeast side of Garden Key harbor are closed to all vessels.

Middle and East Key

Closed April 1- October 15 for turtle nesting.

Bush Key

Closed January 16-October 14 for bird nesting.

Hospital & Long Keys

Closed year round. Visitors should remain 100 feet off shore of all closed islands.

Loggerhead Key

Open year round during daylight hours only. Dock and all structures are closed to public use. Exploring on foot is limited to developed trails and shoreline between water and high tide line only.

Fishing

Important Reminders

All State of Florida saltwater fishing laws and regulations apply except as modified below. Fishing for fin fish (subclass Agnatha, Chondrichthyes, or Osteichthyes) is permitted by closely attended hook and line gear only. Bait fish may be taken by hook and line, dip net or cast net; limited to 5 gallons per vessel per day. Shrimp may be taken by dip net or cast net. Monroe County Fishing Regulations apply for creel limits within the park boundary. Avoid casting near sea turtles, and use circle hooks to avoid catching one. Report injured turtles to a ranger.

Prohibited Activities

Commercial fishing, spear fishing, use of a hand-held hook or snare (except when a gaff is used to land a fish lawfully caught), taking fish by sling or any powered gun, possessing conch, lobster, or ornamental tropical fish or marine life (unless taken outside the park), dragging or trawling a cast net or dip net, and collecting shells or artifacts from land or water are prohibited. Operators of vessels that possess lobster or speared fish are asked to contact park staff via VHF 16 and declare catch they are bringing into the park. Vessels with legally taken lobster aboard which was taken outside the park may not have persons overboard in park waters. Persons from vessels that have brought lobster or speared fish into park waters may only enter the water to swim from the designated swim beach on Garden Key. Spear guns must be broken down prior to entering the park. Spear fishing is prohibited in the park.

Park Areas Closed to Fishing

All fishing is prohibited within the Research Natural Area (RNA), except within a 1 nautical mile radius of Garden Key – see map on reverse. All fish and fishing gear must be stowed prior to entry and during transit through the RNA. See “What is the Research Natural Area?” publication for more information on the RNA.

Garden Key Fishing

Fishing is allowed from the Dinghy/Airplane beach east of the main dock when the airplane is not present, from the main dock when the concession ferry is not present, from the two westernmost finger piers when they are unoccupied, and from the westernmost dinghy beach provided that fishing does not occur within 50 feet of the historic coaling docks/ruins. All other areas of Garden Key are closed to fishing. Fishing from a boat is permitted within a 1-mile radius of Garden Key. All the above mentioned regulations apply. Large yellow buoys mark this historic use area.

Rules for Commercial Fishermen

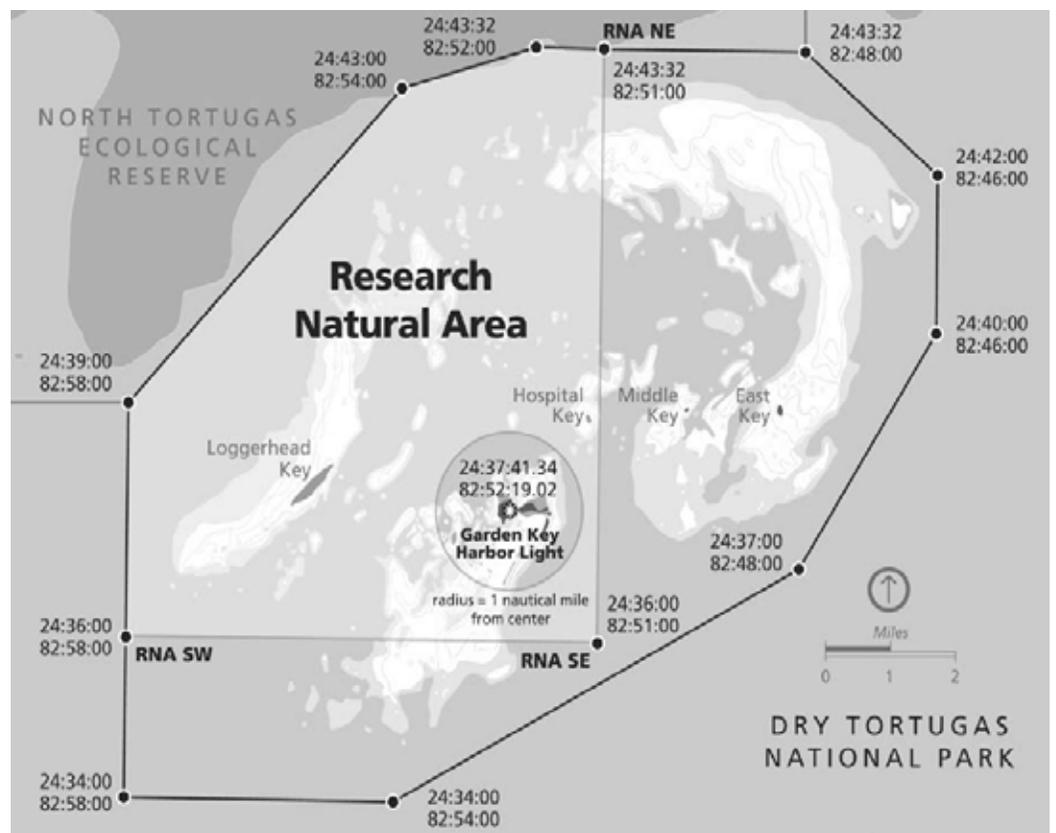
Persons in possession of commercially taken fish or commercial gear, or who are otherwise engaged in commercial fishing, may not fish within the park. Disposal of fish remains from commercial activities is prohibited. Anchoring commercial fishing vessels is limited to Bird Key harbor except in cases of emergency.

Camping

Camping is limited to the Garden Key campground. Camping is limited to 14 consecutive days and a total of 30 days per calendar year. Groups more than 10 need to make prior reservations. Fees are

\$3 per person per night. Fires are limited to match-light charcoal grills in the campground. Ground fires are not permitted in the park. See “Camping” publication for more information.

Map of Park and RNA



Boating

Anchoring, Docking, and Reminders

Anchoring is restricted to sandy bottom. Overnight anchoring must be within one nautical mile of the Garden Key Harbor Light. No anchoring is permitted in the RNA. Personal watercraft (jet skis) are prohibited. Removing or injuring coral or other living or dead organisms is prohibited. Vessel operators are not allowed to strike or injure coral or seagrass, or to allow an anchor or other device to harm underwater features. Tampering with shipwrecks and other submerged cultural resources and removing or moving artifacts is prohibited. All visits are limited to 14 consecutive days and a total of 30 days per calendar year. All heads must be fitted with Coast Guard approved marine sanitation devices; discharge overboard valves must be secured while boat is in park waters. Fish or chumming materials used for fishing, water generated by routine vessel operations such as greywater and deckwash, and uncontaminated bilge water are permitted, except in the RNA, where discharge materials of any kind are prohibited (outside of cooling water or engine exhaust). White pencil buoys denote areas off limits to ALL boaters, including motorized vessels, kayaks, paddle boards, and kite boards.

Permits

Permits are required for all vessels in the park, including the RNA. The only vessels exempt from this rule are those transiting the area without

interruption. Free permits are available on Garden Key at the Visitor Center or Park Headquarters office. See “Boat Permits and Mooring Buoys” publication for more information. Vessels may not anchor within the RNA.

Loggerhead Key

Dock is closed to public use at all times. Landing is permitted south of the dock and the boathouse for dinghies and kayaks. Please use mooring balls for day use near Loggerhead and elsewhere within the RNA.

Garden Key

Dock is open to vessels for two hours per day per vessel (if conditions permit). Dock is reserved for commercial ferries from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Dock is closed sunset to sunrise. Use of motorized vessels within 300 hundred feet of moat wall is prohibited. Vessels in the Garden Key Harbor must be anchored southeast of a line from #12 day channel marker to a point approximately midway between the two northernmost “off-limits” buoys (west end of Bush Key). No loud generators after 10 PM. Anchorage is a flat-wake zone.

Kayaking

Visitors bringing kayaks into the park must also have a permit. It is strongly recommended for kayakers to receive a kayak safety and orientation briefing from park staff prior to a paddling trip. See “Kayaking the Dry Tortugas” publication for more information.

Swimming and Snorkeling

Dive flags are required outside designated swim areas. Avoid swimming in channels. Swimming and snorkeling at the dinghy beach is prohibited. Swim-

ming at Loggerhead Key is restricted to designated swim areas.

Pets

Pets are permitted on Garden Key but not inside Fort Jefferson. Pets are not permitted on any other key in the park. Pets must be on a leash no longer than 6

feet in length and under physical control at all times. Owners must remove pet waste from the park.

Business Operations

Persons conducting any commercial enterprise within the park must possess a Commercial Use Authorization issued by the park. Activities that require a permit include transportation, guided charter

activities (snorkeling, sailing, sportfishing, scuba diving, bird watching, or sightseeing), exchange of money or goods with any boat, and any other for-fee service.

For Additional Information

For more information visit the park website at www.nps.gov/drto. You may also contact a ranger in the

park or the Florida Keys Eco-Discovery Center in Key West at 305-809-4750.