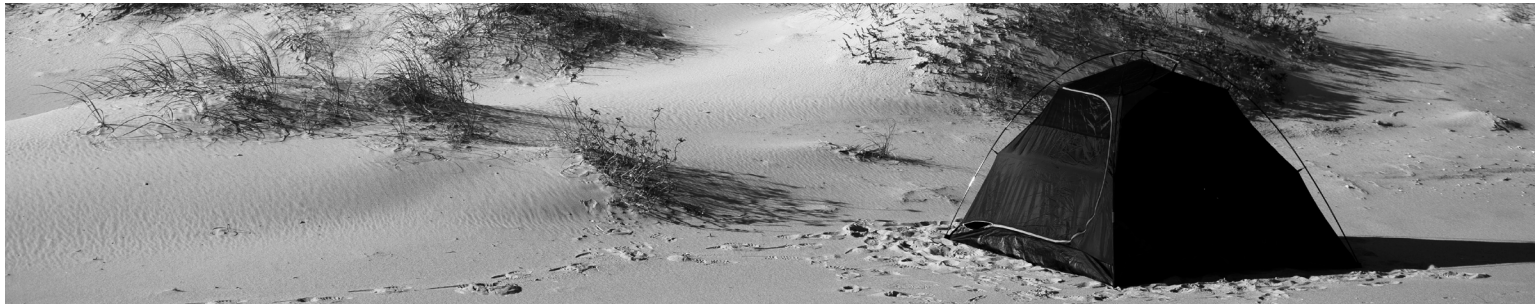




Beach Camping



No campgrounds. Only primitive camping.

Camping offers a memorable and adventurous way to experience Cape Lookout National Seashore. Whether you're listening to waves crashing along the shore or gazing up at the night sky, you're sure to create lasting memories. Before you set out on your next adventure, take a moment to review the following information to help you plan a safe and enjoyable camping trip.

Tips for Camping



Camping at Cape Lookout National Seashore is a different experience from camping at other national or state park areas. There are no established campgrounds in the park and limited amenities, such as water pumps or toilets, available within the park's boundaries. All camping is primitive. You must bring everything you need and take all trash with you.

Finding a Camping Spot:

Camping is permitted on the majority of Cape Lookout National Seashore's barrier islands, with a few exceptions. Camping is not available at Harkers Island. When selecting your campsite, there must be enough room between you and the high tide line for vehicles to drive by. If there isn't enough room, you must find another campsite for the night.

Finding the High Tide Line:

To find the high tide line, look for a line of debris, shells, or seaweed. Darker damp sand will be below, and lighter dry sand will be above. You always want your campsite to be above this line to ensure your belongings don't get wet.

Tents:

Tent campers may set up among, but not on, the dunes. Find a spot with no vegetation. Tent camping is allowed on the ocean beach and the

sound side of the island. Below is a list of areas closed for camping.

For adequate shelter, a tent that has insect netting and is designed to withstand strong winds is recommended. To anchor the tent properly, use stakes that are about one foot in length. Standard stakes may not hold in the sand under high wind conditions.

Vehicle Camping:

Vehicles, including any style of trailer or pop-up camper, or vehicles with a rooftop tent or truck bed camper, must be kept on the oceanside beach seaward of the primary dunes, not between or on top of dunes. In addition, no vehicle is allowed to camp on the trail behind the dunes known as the Back Road. Vehicles are allowed only on North and South Core Banks.

Group Camping:

Groups of 25 or more require a permit for camping. This applies to both campers in vehicles or tents. To obtain a permit, you must go to www.nps.gov/caloc and apply for a Camping Special Use Permit. If you have less than 25 people in your group, you do not need a permit.

These campers are set up correctly.



These campers are set up incorrectly.



Areas Closed to Camping:

- Park Service Property on Harkers Island
- Wildlife Protection Zones
- Designated long-term parking lots/areas
- Portsmouth Village Historic District
- Cape Lookout Light Station
- Cape Lookout Historic Village
- Within 100 feet of any docks, shade shelter, restrooms or other structures
- Within 100 yards of the lighthouse or any cabin or house on the barrier islands
- Within the boundaries of the rental cabin areas

Campfires



Open campfires must be built below the high tide line (in damp sand) and be no wider than 3 feet in diameter. Bonfires are not allowed. Remember that you are the fire department when you are on the island, and you are responsible for the actions of your fire.

A fire may be ignited and maintained only by using fuel sources designed and commonly used for warmth or the preparation of food, such as charcoal briquettes or natural firewood. Lighting or maintaining a fire with other materials including, but not limited to, flammable liquids, garbage, fireworks, plastics, aerosol canisters, batteries, or other manufactured or synthetic materials, is prohibited.

Cooking receptacles which are enclosed on the bottom and sides, such as grills, are permitted in all areas of the park except for Portsmouth Village, the Cape Lookout Village, on cabin or house porches, and wooden structures (including boardwalks and shade shelters) associated with the lighthouse. These grills should be used carefully and with consideration for the surrounding vegetation. All food waste and trash must be taken out of the park: there is no garbage pick-up.

Wood from shipwrecks, historical or archeological sites and wood from standing trees may not be used. Campers are encouraged to bring their own wood because the amount of wood available in the park is extremely limited.

Amenities: Drinking Water, Restrooms and Trash Disposal



Drinking Water:

Fresh water is very limited and available only seasonally at a few widely dispersed locations. Water is available at: the Harkers Island Visitor Center, the Cape Lookout Light Station in the restrooms and at the spigot on the backroad near the boardwalk, and at the cabin camps. Water is **not** available on Shackleford Banks.

Sanitation:

Toilet facilities are available near the lighthouse on the back road near Cape Point, in the Portsmouth Village Visitor Center, and near the dock on Shackleford Banks. The cabin camps have facilities available for day use. Composting toilets are located at Wades Shore on Shackleford.

If camping away from these areas, the use of “catholes” to properly dispose of human waste is important. Select a site above the high tide line and where others will be unlikely to walk or camp. With a small trowel, dig a hole about 6-8 inches deep and 4-6 inches in diameter. Cover the cathole when finished. Using this method minimizes the possibility of spreading disease.

Trash Disposal:

There are no trash receptacles on the islands of Cape Lookout National Seashore. Anything you carry into the park will need to be carried back out. Do not bury your trash! The sand is constantly moving and buried trash resurfaces quickly. This causes problems for other visitors and for wildlife.

Frequently Asked Questions



What is the weather at Cape Lookout National Seashore?

Weather conditions can change rapidly on the islands. During the summer months, afternoon thunderstorms can occur. These storms pass quickly, but lightning can strike dunes, the beach and water. Hurricane season begins on June 1 and ends on November 30. The park will be evacuated and closed if a hurricane threatens the area.

Are there mosquitoes or other biting bugs?

Biting insects such as mosquitoes, greenhead flies, deerflies and gnats are active throughout the seashore during the months of May through October. Chiggers and ticks are also present. Carry insect repellent with you.

What are some items I should bring when camping?

Sunscreen is essential when visiting the seashore. There are no camp stores within the park. Campers should bring all the food, fresh water, and firewood they will need during their visit. Firewood is not available for purchase on

the island.

Campers should properly store food and fish bait. Sea gulls and raccoons are very adept at raiding your camp. Store all food and bait in sturdy containers with locking lids.

When tent camping, very long tent stakes or corkscrew style stakes are preferable. The short tent stakes are not ideal for soft sand and may come loose.

Is paddle in camping allowed?

Kayakers and canoers who are camping in the park are asked to leave a float plan with a responsible family member or friend who will see you within 24 hours of your planned return date.

I want to bring my pet camping. What are the rules for pets?

Pets are allowed in the seashore. However, they need to be on a 6 foot leash at all times.

Emergencies:



Your Safety is Your Responsibility

The seashore’s remoteness presents challenges and hazards to the inexperienced or ill-prepared. The best, safest, and most enjoyable trips include good planning and preparation.

Emergencies

Limited emergency services are available throughout the park. Emergency response and evacuations can take time because of the complexity of the environment.

In the case of an emergency, dial 911.

- **Non-Emergency Law Enforcement:** (252) 728-2250
- Select Option 2
- Select Option 2 Again