Channel Islands

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Channel Islands National Park

Exploring San Miguel Island

Welcome to San Miguel Island, one of five islands in Channel Islands National Park. This is your island. It is also your responsibility. Please take a moment to read this bulletin and learn what you can do to take care of San Miguel. This information and the map on the back will show you what you can see and do here on San Miguel.

About the Island

San Miguel is the home of pristine tidepools, rare plants, and the strange caliche forest. Four species of seals and sea lions come here to breed and give birth. For 10,000 years the island was home to the seagoing Chumash people. Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo set foot here in 1542 as the first European to explore the California coast. For 100 years the island was a sheep ranch and after that it was used by the military. San Miguel is still owned by the Navy, but it is managed under agreement by the National Park Service. In 1980 it was designated part of Channel Islands National Park.

Access Permit Required

A permit (inlcuding liability waiver) is required to visit and hike on the island. They may be obtained at concessioner offices and on the island.

Many parts of San Miguel are closed to protect wildlife, fragile plants, and geological features. Several areas, however, are open for you to explore on your own. Others are open to you when accompanied by a park ranger.

On your own you may explore the Cuyler Harbor beach, Cabrillo monument, and the Lester ranch site.

The Nidever Canyon trail will take you to the ranch site, monument and ranger station. The trail begins at the top of the dune above Gull Rock. It climbs along the east wall of the canyon.

Contacting a Ranger

To see other parts of the island, such as Point Bennett or the caliche forest, you must go with a ranger.

The San Miguel ranger can be contacted on Marine Radio Channel 16. You can also arrange a hike with the ranger through park headquarters at (805) 658-5730.

Island Rules

Everything is protected. Do not collect anything.

San Miguel Island is open only when National Park Service personnel are on the island.

Access permit (including liability waiver) is required.

No pets are allowed on shore.

No smoking or fires.

Take your trash off the island with you.

Hikers must stay on trails.

Hikers must be escorted except where indicated on this map.

California State fishing regulations apply. No fishing in marine reserves.

Safety

The island was a former bombing range and there are possible unexploded ordnance. Do not disturb any munitions that you may find on or off shore. It is extremely dangerous and may detonate at any time. Report its location to a ranger, who will have it removed by qualified personnel.

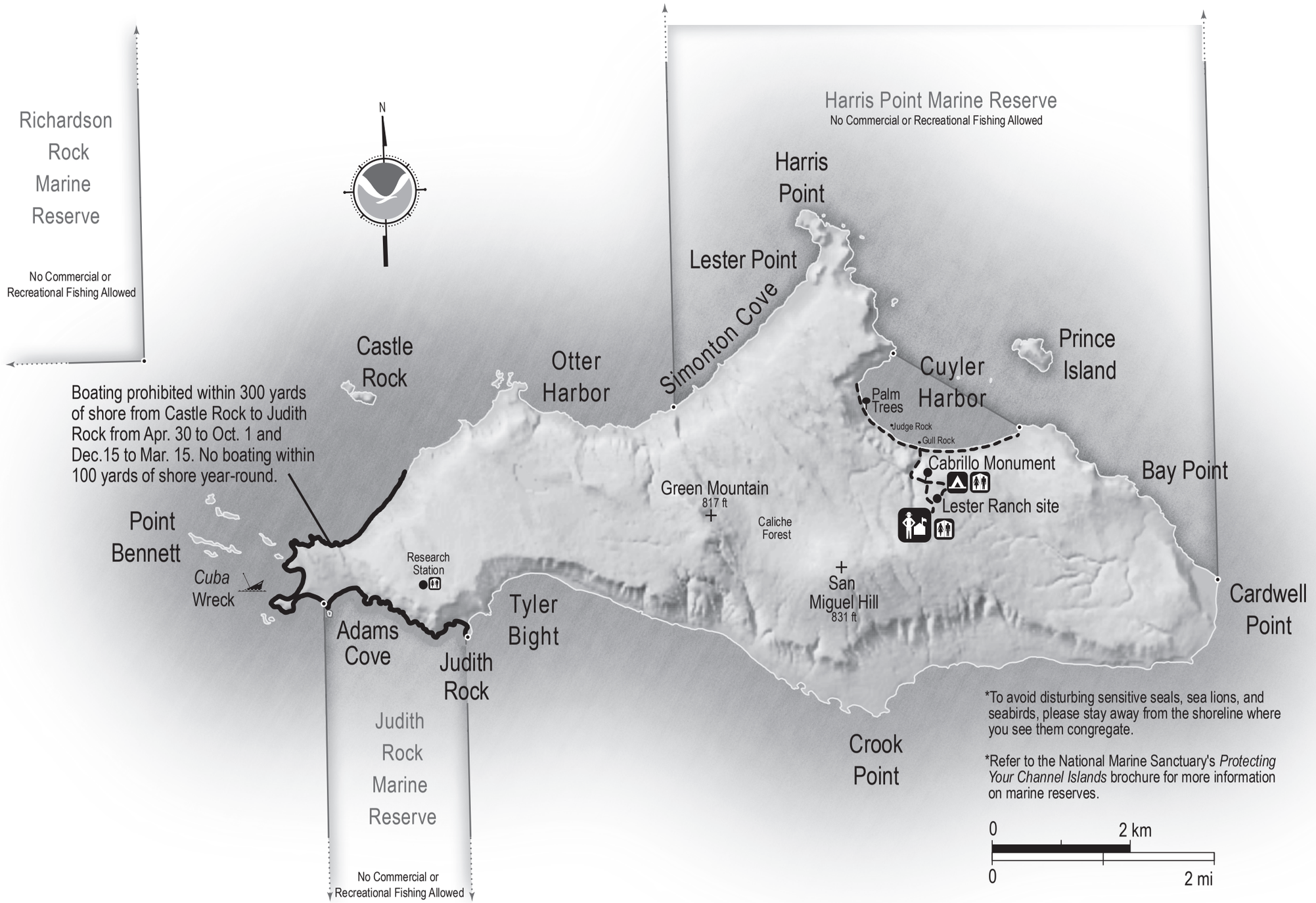
Use caution when crossing the rockfall along the beach.

The Nidever Canyon trail is steep and slippery. Watch your step.

Hantavirus has been found in deer mouse populations on San Miguel. This is a potentially fatal disease and some basic precautions should be taken: avoid contact with rodents; do not feed wild animals; keep food and drink in rodent-proof containers. For more information, please see the bulletin board in the campground.

Carry plenty of water and drink it.

Hikers should never hike alone—use the buddy system.



Using This Map

This map is your guide to the open areas on San Miguel Island. The dashed lines mark the trails and sections of beach that you may travel on your own with an access permit.

- On the beach, you may walk to either end of the beach to where the sand runs into the rock.
- If seals are present on the beach, do not approach or disturb them.
- The distance from the palm trees to the campground is about one mile.
- Pit toilets are available at both the ranger station and the campground.
- There is no drinking water on the island.
- Landing is only permitted on the beach at Cuyler Harbor.
- Only the unshaded portion of Cuyler Harbor (outside of the marine reserve) is open to fishing.