

Assateague State Park Frequently Asked Questions

Where can I swim at Assateague State Park?

You can swim anywhere along the ocean, a designated swim sector is located at the Day Use beach and is signified by flags on the north and south boundary. No surfing, kayaking, or fishing is permitted in the swim sector. No lifeguards are on duty; swim at your own risk. Always use caution when in or near the ocean and be aware of hazards and dangerous conditions including rip currents. Children should be watched closely and never left unattended.

How do I know what the surf conditions are?

From Memorial Day to Labor Day park staff will fly colored flags to indicate the safety level as part of our surf condition warning system. Green flags represent normal surf conditions, however visitors are urged to use caution and know their limits as the ocean is always changing. Yellow flags mean that certain hazards exist such as rip currents, strong longshore currents, etc. and extreme caution should be used. Red flags stand for hazardous surf conditions, knee deep wading may be permitted but no swimming will be permitted. Double red flags indicate severe surf conditions and no one will be allowed in the water as the heavy surf would be too dangerous for even the most experienced swimmers. There may also be times when the beach is closed due to extenuating circumstances, such as lightning and severe storms. Park staff will advise beach-goers of these closures. Beaches are unguarded and swimming is at your own risk. Always use caution, keep a close eye on children, and avoid swimming alone. Ocean hazards can exist at any time and conditions are subject to change throughout the day.

What inflatables are allowed in the ocean?

Rafts and boogie boards are permitted. Canvas rafts are highly recommended over plastic ones. Very large rafts and inflatable boats should not be used on windy days as they can drift quickly offshore. Inner tubes are very dangerous in the surf because they greatly increase your risk of a spinal injury and are never allowed. They are not permitted in the State Park beach area and we strongly advise against their use in the ocean.

I have some doubts about my child's swimming abilities. Do you recommend Water-Wings?

"Swimmies" are not designed for the surf environment. Children may use a US Coast Guard approved life jacket.

What are the rules regarding kayaking?

You may launch or land non-motorized vessels on the beach during daylight hours only and only outside of the swim sector at the Day Use beach area, designated with flags. If you paddle across the swim sector area you must be well outside (east) of the breakers and maintain a safe distance from all other swimmers. Children, below the age of 13, are required by law to wear a lifejacket at all times while the vessel is underway. Adults must have a lifejacket aboard for each person and it is highly recommended that they be worn at all times.

What other restrictions apply to the beach?

Alcohol, glass, fires, and charcoal grills are not allowed on the beach at any time. Metal detectors are only allowed beginning the day after Labor Day through May 30th and only on the ocean side of the primary dune. Metal detecting will not be allowed from May 31st until the day after Labor Day. Any exceptions must obtain written permission from the Park Manager. All holes dug may only be as deep as a small child's knees and must be filled in before visitors' leave. No tunneling is allowed. All recreational nets should be set-up parallel to the ocean to allow emergency vehicles access to the beach.

Are there any other natural dangers I should be aware of besides the wild ponies?

The number one danger is the ocean itself because it is constantly changing. Features such as tides, currents, sandbars, and inshore holes vary from day to day. Marine life you may encounter include fish, horseshoe crabs, jelly fish, sea-lice, and porpoise or dolphin. Occasionally rays, sea turtles, sharks, seals, and whales may be spotted. You also should be aware of the weather. Leave the beach if storms approach, especially if there is lightning, and seek appropriate shelter.

Do you have a seasonal Day-Use Pass?

There is a Maryland Park Service Passport that covers day-use charges only and is valid at all Maryland State Parks. It is called the "Maryland State Park Passport." The cost of the pass is \$75.00 for MD residents and \$100.00 for out-of-state residents. This pass is available at the Ranger Station while the campground is open, at the Park's Headquarters at all other times, and on the DNR website.

Can I have pets in the State Park Day-Use Area?

Pets are permitted in the day use areas from Labor Day to the Friday before Memorial Day.

I'm over 62 and have a National Park pass. Can I use it at the State Park?

No. The State Park has its own Golden Age Pass. It is available at the Ranger Station, or at the Park's Headquarters, or online at [Maryland Park Service Golden Age Pass website](#). It has a one-time service charge of \$10 and seniors can receive their card immediately (depending on availability). It is

good for all MD State Parks day use areas and a reduced rate for camping every night except weekends and holidays. It also covers boat launching fees at our marina; be sure to display the Golden Age Pass in your vehicle.

Why am I charged for children at day-use?

Only children in car seats are free. By Maryland law, children under the age of 4 or under 40 pounds are REQUIRED to be in a car seat at ALL times. This is to promote child safety and to make drivers aware of the law. Enforcement Officers are available to write out a citation. Children under 16 years of age must be restrained in a seat belt, and are not allowed in the back of a moving vehicle, including a truck bed.

Can I use the day-use area just to take a shower?

If you have already paid at the entrance, you may use the showers. However, if campers from the National Park or other nearby campgrounds come to the State Park just to take a shower, then they must pay the day-use charge. This charge is non-transferable and is only valid on the day of purchase.

Where can I find the free bathrooms?

Free restrooms are located at the National Park's Visitor's Center on the mainland.

Can I park in the lot in front of the Ranger Station?

Registered campers only are allowed to park in the overflow camper lot in front of the Ranger Station. This parking lot is not to be utilized by visitors going to the beach.

Can I take alcohol on the beach?

Alcohol is NOT permitted on the beach, nor is it permitted in any other public areas, including parking lots.

Can I have a bonfire on the beach?

Open fires are not allowed at the State Park beach area. The National Park does allow open fires, with prior permission from the National Park Ranger Station.

Can I have a barbeque grill?

Charcoal grills are not allowed because there is no place to dispose of the waste. Self-contained or

mini-propane grills are allowed, but are not to be used on the concession deck area or on the beach.

Why can't I walk on the dunes?

Walking on or crossing the dunes is not allowed. There are dune crossings available in day-use and at least one in each of the camping loops. This is to protect the vegetation on the dunes, which in turn helps to keep sand and soil from eroding.

Is there a clothing optional beach?

No. There is no such beach and anyone who violates this policy will be cited and/or fined.

What and where is the "Big" Visitor's Center?

The Visitor's Center is located on the mainland. It is free and is run by the National Park Service. It has aquariums, touch tanks, movies, a gift shop, and restrooms.

Can I ride a bicycle here?

Yes. You may ride anywhere in the park. Please make certain that you stay in the designated bicycle lanes and that children under 16 are wearing a helmet, as is required by Maryland law. You can park in the day-use area if you pay the service charge to enter, or park across the bridge and use the bicycle and pedestrian bridge to cross the Sinepuxent Bay. There is also parking at the National Park and the sides of the roads can be used for bikes. Brochures covering Maryland's bicycle laws and a Maryland Bicycle Map can be obtained at the Ranger Station (limited quantities available.)

Where can I fly a kite?

A kite can be flown anywhere in the State Park, provided it does not obstruct the lifeguards' view of the beach. No permit is needed.

I have a family member with special needs. Do you have anything available to help them enjoy the park?

Wheelchairs designed specifically for use on the beach are available in the Ranger Station at no charge. We ask (if possible) for prior notice if they will be requested, as they are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Assateague State Park offers campsites that are ADA accessible with an asphalt path to the bathhouse. Refer to the [Maryland Park Service Reservations site](#) for information about these campsites. All bathhouses within the park and at the marina are wheelchair accessible. The fishing pier at the marina, the Day Use Concessions area and Ranger Station are

accessible as well. The Universal Disability Pass is a free lifetime entrance pass to those State operated parks with entrance service charges. It is issued to persons who have a permanent physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. The form for this pass is available online at [the Universal Disability Pass website](#). This pass is available only through DNR's Licensing and Registration Service Office; it is not available at Assateague State Park.