

# The Islands

Hammocks Beach State Park is comprised of three primitive islands: Bear Island, Jones Island and Huggins Island. Although the park staff are enthusiastic to answer any questions posed about these islands, Bear Island is currently the only island we offer transportation to. However, all islands are open for public exploration and all park rules still apply.

**Bear Island** – An 892-acre pristine barrier island is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the south and by salt marshes, estuarine creeks and the Intracoastal Waterway to the north. It is nearly four miles of white sandy beach, shrub thickets and maritime forests.

**History** – Early in the twentieth century, Dr. William Sharpe, a neurosurgeon from New York, ventured to Bear Island to hunt. His love of the island prompted him to acquire it for his retirement. Sharpe intended to will the property to John Hurst, his longtime hunting guide and friend but Hurst persuaded him to donate it to the North Carolina Teachers' Association, an organization of African American teachers. In 1950, the group assumed the deed to Bear Island and attempted to develop the property. Limited funds and the island's remoteness rendered their efforts unsuccessful. In 1961, the association donated the island to the state of North Carolina for a park. Initially planned as a park for minorities, Hammocks Beach State Park opened for all following the Civil Rights Act of 1964.



**Huggins Island** – Located just east of Bear Island in the mouth of the Bogue Inlet, is a 225-acre coastal island visible from downtown Swansboro. The island consists of 115 acres of upland area, surrounded by 96 acres of lowland marsh. Huggins Island is home to a maritime swamp-forest, which is listed as a "Globally Rare and Significant Area." The island's varied natural habitats and cultural sites are some of many factors that contributed to the island's inclusion into the North Carolina State Park System. Its rich landscape and historical value make it an invaluable asset. From American Indian fishing and hunting grounds, to being home to a Confederate six-cannon-battery from 1861-62, Huggins Island is steeped in North Carolina's rich coastal history.

**Jones Island** – Jones Island is a 23-acre coastal island located along the mouth of the White Oak River. Visible from the Swansboro Highway 24 Bridge, Jones Island is a unique coastal fringe evergreen forest island containing a small wetland area that is considered regionally significant. This island was obtained to act as a riparian buffer in an effort to help enhance water quality in the White Oak River. Also, the eastern painted bunting, a considerably rare breeding bird for North Carolina is known to nest near the edge of the coastal evergreen forest. This particular species is currently a candidate for inclusion on the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Species.

# Getting There

**Ferry Service** – The park office, located inside the visitor center, and the ferry dock are located on the mainland in Swansboro. From the visitor center, the passenger ferry provides transportation to Bear Island for a nominal fee. Discounts are available for senior citizens 62 and older and children 12 and under. All passengers boarding the ferry must have a ticket. The 2.5-mile ferry ride takes approximately 15 minutes and offers a glimpse into the world of our wetland inhabitants like herons, great egrets and oyster catchers. During your journey across the Intracoastal Waterway, keep your eyes open and be on the lookout for bottlenose dolphin. Ferry service operates daily from Memorial Day through Labor Day. The ferries run Wednesday through Sunday in May and September, and Friday through Sunday in April and October, except in inclement weather. Departure times are listed on the reverse side. During popular summer months, a line often forms for the ferry and the island quickly reaches capacity. Arrive early in the day to avoid long delays.



**Private Boats** – Although the ferries work on a limited schedule, the park is open to visitors year-round. Journey to the island by private boat or marine taxi. Boats may be beached or tied up at the island bulkhead. Docking along the ferry pier is strictly prohibited. When traveling to the island by boat, it is best to navigate along the ferry route. Boating in the inlet is not advisable due to shifting sand and sandbars.

**Canoe/Kayak** – Recently, Hammocks Beach State Park has developed an over-the-water canoe/kayak launch. The launch consists of a floating dock and makes getting in and out of the water an effortless task. Borrow the park's kayak carts to maneuver your kayak/canoe to and from the launch pad and save your energy for your paddle. Follow the marked trails through the marshy wetlands and immerse yourself in a world unlike any other. There are three trails available. Two lead to Bear Island, one takes you to the east side of the island and the second branches off the first and follows the island along the sound front to the ferry basin. The third trail takes you around Huggins Island.



# The Beach



The sun-drenched shore of Bear Island stretches for almost four miles. Walk the length of the beach and find shells that have washed up in the night but please leave driftwood as it stabilizes the dunes and acts as a barrier against the elements. From swimming through the ocean waves to creating the sand castle of your dreams, there is an activity for everyone. Enjoy making lasting memories while spending your vacations with us.

**Please remember:** Bear Island is a trash-free area. Campers and visitors should plan to take any trash and recycling items off of the island when they leave.

# Camping



**Camping** – If primitive backpack camping is what you desire, Hammocks Beach offers a haven like no other. Come prepared for a secluded night. Weather and insects can be harsh at times. Please remember to check for inclement weather at the front desk when registering for your camp site(s). You will be required to carry your equipment to and from your campsite without assistance from park staff. While packing for your visit with us please take into consideration the ½ mile walk to the beach from the ferry landing. The path can be hot and it is recommended that you wear plenty of sunscreen and properly hydrate prior to your visit. All campers must report to the office to register their vehicles. Unregistered vehicles will be towed at owner's expense.

**We DO NOT allow:** Open fires, public nudity, alcoholic beverages, camping in or around the bathhouse/picnic area(s) and no pets, wagons/carts on the ferry.

**Make a reservation online at [ncparks.gov](http://ncparks.gov) or call 1-877-7-CAMP-NC (1-877-722-6762).**

# Flora & Fauna

Barrier islands are in a constant state of change. Shaped by the forces of wind, waves and storms. They provide a unique habitat for a variety of fauna and flora. Some examples of the flora found on Bear Island include live oak, wax myrtle, sea oats, sea rocket, sea-beach amaranth and beach morning glory.



Perhaps the most interesting animal found on the island is the loggerhead sea turtle. Between mid-May and late August, female loggerheads come ashore at night to nest above the high tide line. Weighing from 150 to 300 pounds, the females nest every three or four years. Nests range from 10 to 20 inches deep and contain approximately 120 eggs about the size of ping-pong balls. After a two-month incubation period, the hatchlings emerge from the nest and race to the sea. The life of a baby sea turtle is a struggle for survival. Dangerous predators abound like sly foxes and curious raccoons that forage through turtle nests in search of their next meals. Nocturnal creatures such as ghost crabs enjoy feeding on the hatchlings as well. Should the loggerhead manage to survive these threats, it may live up to 70 or 80 years. Sea turtles are on the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Species. Those who disturb or harm turtles, nests or hatchlings are subject to penalties.



Hammocks Beach is also a haven for migratory shore birds that feed in tidal marshes and rest on the beach in the spring and fall. Watch herons and egrets search for food or witness with awe and enthusiasm the unique-looking oyster catcher crack open an oyster shell with his sharp slender beak. Bottlenose dolphin swim offshore, while white-tailed deer, raccoons and grey fox inhabit inland areas.



# Nature's Classroom

Hammocks Beach holds the key to many of nature's best kept secrets. Unlock the door of nature's classroom and watch the mysteries unfold. Our rangers will guide you on exciting explorations where you'll uncover fascinating surroundings and make great discoveries about the world in which we live. Bring our state's rich natural and cultural heritage alive. Embark on a learning adventure and discover the wonders of this unique barrier island.



Hammocks Beach State Park offers a wide range of educational programs for visitors of any age. Come learn about the bottlenose dolphin by watching an educational video and handling dolphin vertebrae or other programs about horseshoe crabs, sharks, brown pelicans, sand dollars or sea shells. Programs are

offered both on the mainland and the island either in the air-conditioned classroom or on the back deck overlooking the Intracoastal Waterway. Contact the park office or the events page of our website for more information on available programs.

**School Programs** – Hammocks Beach State Park offers a variety of school programs for all grades. Environmental Education Learning Experience (EELE) classes were designed to educate the public on environmental matters in the state park system. We encourage teachers to visit our facilities prior to the day of their field trip so that they can gain a better understanding of the way our park operates. If you decide to visit the island, take note that the ferry can courier a maximum of two full boat loads per school group. Wearing proper shoes and attire while visiting the park will help to eliminate hazardous situations. Please schedule a date for your school group with the park office.

# Rules & Regulations

Make your visit a safe and rewarding experience. Some of our regulations are posted for the protection of our visitors and our park. A complete list is available at the park office.

- The removal of any plant, animal, rock or mineral is prohibited. Keep out of posted bird nesting areas.
- All N.C. state parks are wildlife preserves. Hunting or trapping is not permitted. Loggerhead sea turtles are protected by law. Anyone who harms the turtles, nests or hatchlings is subject to penalties.
- Firearms and other weapons are prohibited except that those with a proper permit may possess a concealed handgun in permitted areas and under the requirements of North Carolina G.S. 14-415.11. All firearms and weapons are prohibited in visitor centers & park offices.
- Place trash and recyclables in proper receptacles located in mainland visitor center parking lot. State law requires aluminum cans and plastic bottles be placed in a recycling container.
- Fireworks are prohibited.
- The possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages is prohibited.
- Pets must be kept on a leash no longer than six feet. Pets are not allowed on the ferry, in the bathhouse or swimming area.
- Camping is permitted in designated areas by permit only.
- Public nudity is prohibited.

# For Your Safety

To prevent accidents, remember the following safety tips.

- Rip tides, strong currents, Portuguese Man-of-War and other marine life may create hazardous swimming conditions. Consult park staff for safety advice.
- Be prepared for a ½ mile walk from the ferry dock to the beach and bathhouse area.
- Do not feed or approach wildlife. Report sick or aggressive animals to rangers.
- Remember you may be boating in unfamiliar waters. Use cautious seamanship. Do not boat in the inlet.
- Prolonged exposure to heat, wind and sunlight may cause sun poisoning and/or dehydration. Bring sun protection and drink plenty of fluids.
- Dress properly. There are few places on the island to escape the heat of summer. Hot weather makes hat and shoes a must.
- Bring insect repellent for protection against mosquitoes and other insects.
- Be alert to approaching storms and seek shelter in the bathhouses or among the dunes.
- An emergency phone is located at the bathhouse. To operate dial a "9" before dialing 911 for assistance.

Contact park staff for other safety tips or an explanation of park rules.

# Welcome!



Thank you for visiting Hammocks Beach State Park. While you are here, please take the time to enjoy all that the Crystal Coast has to offer. Venture to Bear Island and reward yourself with vivid memories of one of the most unspoiled beaches on the Atlantic coast. Accessible only by passenger ferry or private boat, there is only one thing at Hammocks Beach that is crowded - the list of things to do.

- Stroll the beach with laughing gulls and sandpipers.
- Cast a baited hook into endless rows of foaming breakers.
- Discover tiny specimens of marine life in tidal pools and mudflats.
- Use a camera or paintbrush to capture the green and gold grasses that color the salt marshes.
- Spend the night among the sand dunes with the stars as your only companions.
- Or simply bask in the sun and do nothing at all.

Secluded and tranquil, free from intruding commercialism, Hammocks Beach is arguably the best kept secret of North Carolina's Crystal Coast.

## Park Hours

September - May 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
June - August 8 a.m. - 7 p.m.

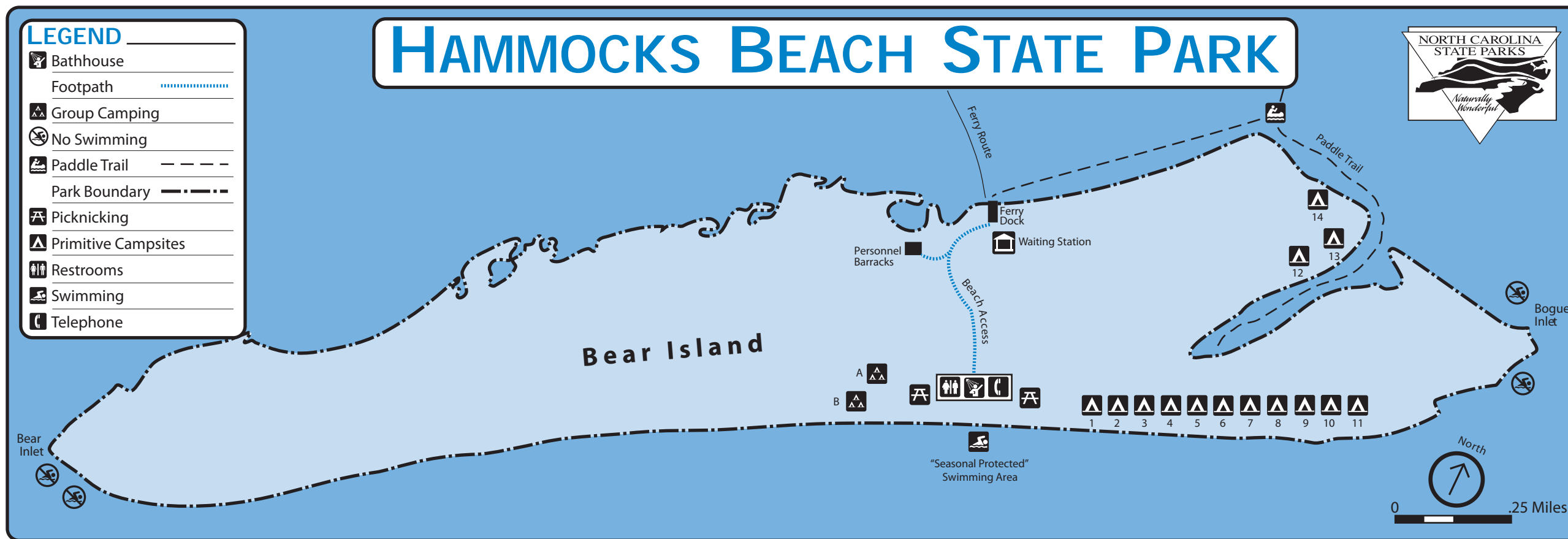
## Contact Information

Hammocks Beach State Park  
1572 Hammocks Beach Road  
Swansboro, NC 28584  
(910) 326-4881  
hammocks.beach@ncdenr.gov  
www.ncparks.gov

N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation  
Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources  
1615 MSC  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1615  
(919) 733-4181



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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. Are there bears on Bear Island?  
A. No. Bear Island was originally spelled BARE due to the lack of vegetation that was present on the island. Later, mapmakers changed it to BEAR to coincide with the neighboring area of Bear Creek.

Q. Can you make reservations for the ferry?  
A. No. It is first come, first served.

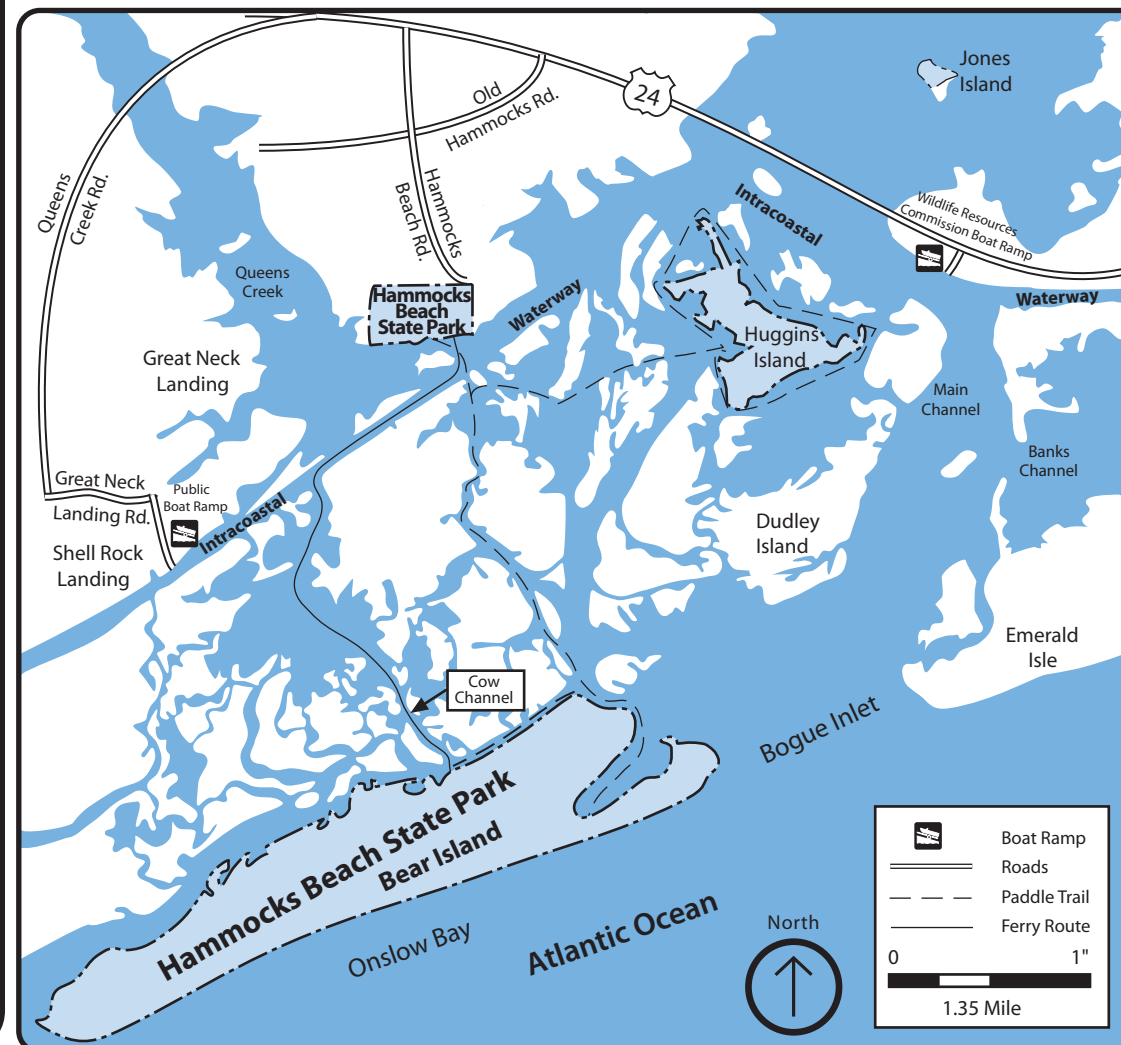
Q. Can reservations be made for campsites?  
A. Yes. A reservation can be made from 11 months in advance and up until 48 hours prior to the arrival date. Visit [ncparks.gov](http://ncparks.gov) or call 1-877-7-CAMP-NC (1-877-722-6762) to make reservations.

Q. Are pets allowed on the ferry?  
A. No. Pets are not allowed on the ferry due to state health codes.

Q. Are there trash cans or recycle bins on Bear Island?  
A. No. Bear Island is designated a trash free zone. Bio-degradable plastic bags are available for carrying trash and recycling off the island.

Q. Can you have fires on Bear Island or in your campsite?  
A. No. Open fires of any kind are not allowed in the park. A camp stove is recommended for cooking. If you use a charcoal grill you are responsible for taking the used coals off the island. Do not bury used coals in the sand or throw them into the ocean.

Q. What is on Bear Island?  
A. Primitive backpack campsites, a designated swimming area, bird nesting areas, picnic shelters, a bathhouse and a concession stand. Lifeguards are on duty and the concession stand is open Memorial Day through Labor Day as staffing permits.



## FERRY INFORMATION

**Ticket Prices**

\$5	Adults
\$3	Senior Citizens (62 and up)
\$3	Children (ages 6-12)
FREE	Children (5 and under)

Ticket prices are subject to change, please see park website, [ncparks.gov](http://ncparks.gov) for current prices.  
\*\*\*Everyone boarding the ferry **MUST** have a ticket.\*\*\*

**Memorial Weekend through Labor Day Monday & Tuesday**

Departs Mainland	Departs Island
9:30 am	10:00 am
10:30 am	11:00 am
11:30 am	12:00 pm
12:30 pm	1:00 pm
1:30 pm	2:00 pm
2:30 pm	3:00 pm
3:30 pm	4:00 pm
4:30 pm	5:00 pm
5:30 pm (last trip)	6:00 pm (last trip)

**Wednesday through Sunday**

Departs Mainland	Departs Island
9:30 am	10:00 am
10:00 am	10:30 am
10:30 am	11:00 am
11:00 am	11:30 am
11:30 am	12:00 pm
12:00 pm	12:30 pm
12:30 pm	1:00 pm
1:00 pm	1:30 pm
1:30 pm	2:00 pm
2:00 pm	2:30 pm
2:30 pm	3:00 pm
3:00 pm	3:30 pm
3:30 pm	4:00 pm
4:00 pm	4:30 pm
4:30 pm	5:00 pm
5:00 pm	5:30 pm
5:30 pm (last trip)	6:00 pm (last trip)



# STATE PARK BEACH HAMMOCKS HAMMOCKS BEACH STATE PARK

The mainland portion of Hammocks Beach State Park is located in Onslow County between Jacksonville and Morehead City. In Swansboro, Hammocks Beach Road, off of highway 24 leads to the park entrance adjacent to Queens Creek. From the mainland, the passenger ferry departs for Bear Island. The island is also accessible by private boat or marine taxi service.

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