

# Carolina Beach State Park



## PARK INFORMATION



GPS: 34.04297, -77.9066050

**Carolina Beach State Park**  
1010 State Park Road  
Carolina Beach, NC 28428

**Office:** 910-458-8206

**Marina:** 910-458-7770

carolina.beach@ncparks.gov



Please visit the North Carolina State Parks website or contact the park office for **the most current information** about seasonal hours, activities, alerts, camping fees, programs, rules and weather.

## AT A GLANCE



**Established:** 1969

**Landmark:** Sugarloaf Dune, which has been a navigational marker since 1663 and offers a great view of the Cape Fear River

**You can find...**the rare venus flytrap

**Trails:** 9 trails

- › 2 wheelchair-accessible
- › 1 Kids TRACK trail
- › Over 8.5 miles of hiking
- › 1 mile biking



## ACTIVITIES

### ON THE WATER



**Boating:** A 54-slip marina with two public boat ramps is located at the junction of Snow's Cut and the Cape Fear River. Fuel, snacks, and fishing and camping supplies are available at the marina store. Restrooms and a laundry room are also available. Showers are provided for boat slip renters. Please contact marina staff for fees.

**Fishing:** Fish for flounder, spot, sheepshead and speckled trout from the riverbank or the wheelchair-accessible fishing deck. A N.C. Coastal Recreational Fishing License is required.

**Swimming** is *prohibited* throughout the park due to dangerous currents and sharp drop-offs near the shores.

## CAMPING



### 83 family campsites

- › Full hookup site: **9**
- › Electric & water hookup site: **4**
- › Non-electric sites: **70**
- › Wheelchair-accessible site: **1**

### 4 camper cabins

- › Sleep 6 people each
- › Electrical outlets, heating and air-conditioning

### 2 group campsites



**MAKE A RESERVATION**  
[www.ncparks.gov](http://www.ncparks.gov) 1-877-722-6762

## PICNICKING



**Picnicking:** A picnic area with tables and grills is located near the bank of Snow's Cut, between the campground and marina. Water, restrooms and parking are available nearby.



## TRAILS

**Campground Trail** ● easy 1.0 mile  
Begins and ends at the visitor center and briefly joins the Sugarloaf Trail. Much of this trail winds through a coastal fringe sandhill forest, dominated by longleaf pines and live oaks.

**Fitness Trail** ● easy 1.0 mile  
Wheelchair-accessible loop with exercise and activity stations set up along the trail. Located off of 7th Street with parking at the Carolina Beach Recreation Center.

**Flytrap Trail** ◆ easy 0.5 mile  
Wheelchair-accessible trail that loops through pocosin wetlands, longleaf pine and wiregrass savanna communities. Venus flytraps can be seen along the edges of the pocosins. Wildflowers bloom along the trail. Parts of the trail travel along wooden boardwalks.

**Oak Toe Trail** ◆ easy 0.25 mile  
Spurs off the Sugarloaf Trail and journeys to the Marsh Overlook. Offers views of the Cape Fear River and brackish marsh and sightings of fiddler crab, dwarf palmetto and oak toe lichen.

**Sand Live Oak Trail** ◆ easy 1.5 miles  
Goes along the river and through an ancient sand dune forest, looping around the southern end of the park before connecting back to Sugarloaf Trail. Part of this trail is on U.S. Federal property.

**Snow's Cut Trail** ◆ easy 0.75 mile  
Begins at the picnic area and follows along Snow's Cut through a pine-hardwood forest. Offers scenic views of the Intracoastal Waterway.

**TRACK Trail** ◆ easy 0.25 mile  
Section of the Snow's Cut Trail designated as a self-guided trail for kids. Activity brochures may be found at the picnic area trailhead and at the family campground trail access near campsite #20.

**Sugarloaf Trail** ● easy 3.0 miles  
Begins at the marina parking area and journeys through a coastal evergreen forest, coastal fringe sandhill forest, tidal cypress-gum swamp and longleaf pine savanna on your way to the Sugarloaf Dune. Offers great birding opportunities.

**Swamp Trail** ● easy 0.75 mile  
Begins and ends along Sugarloaf Trail. Provides access to the group camping area, and offers views of a tidal cypress-gum swamp and brackish marsh.

## LIMESINK PONDS

Limesink ponds are formed by sinkholes in areas where limestone has dissolved over a very long period of time and have caused the surface soil to form a depression. Three limesink ponds, each vegetated by a unique plant community, are found in the sand dunes of the park. Cypress Pond, the most unusual of the three, is dominated by a dwarf cypress swamp forest. Lily Pond is occupied by the oval leaves and white flowers of water lilies. Grass Pond, which dries out almost yearly, is filled with a variety of aquatic sedges. Carnivorous plants thrive in the boggy soil around its edge and in the park's acidic, mineral-poor soil.



Cypress Pond

## ECOLOGY

### ANIMALS



The small ponds in the park are home to several frog species. Alligators may occasionally be seen along the river near the marina. Carolina anoles, five-lined skinks, six-lined racerunners and various snake species including the Eastern coral snake are also found. White-tailed deer, raccoons and gray squirrels are abundant. An occasional fox squirrel, gray fox or river otter may also be spotted in the park.

The park is a great place for bird watching. The park is located along an important migration corridor and attracts many birds during their migrations.

#### Some of the birds found:

- › Brown pelicans
- › Warblers
- › Finches
- › Woodpeckers
- › Painted buntings
- › Yellowthroats
- › Prairie warblers
- › Ospreys
- › Tufted titmice



Tufted titmouse

## PLANT LIFE



Several coastal ecosystems are present in the park. Forests with longleaf pine, turkey oak and live oak occupy the relict sand dunes. Between the dunes are pocosins, or dense shrub swamps, populated by pond pines, loblolly and sweet bay, yaupon and evergreen shrubs. Adjacent to the river, brackish marshes consisting primarily of cordgrasses and sedges can be found.

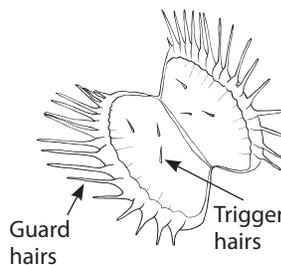
#### Carnivorous plants found at the park:

- › Pitcher plants
- › Bladderworts
- › Sundews
- › Butterworts
- › Venus Flytrap

**About the Venus flytrap:** The clamshell-shaped trap is actually a modified leaf lined with tiny hairs, called trigger hairs, and an interior colored from pale yellow to bright red. The outer edges of the leaf are lined with guard hairs. When the trigger hairs are touched, the leaves close and the guard hairs mesh, entrapping its prey. The plant then secretes digestive fluids and, within three to five days, nutrients from the prey are absorbed and the trap reopens. Each trap dies after closing and opening three times. New traps emerge from underground stems to replace dead traps.



Venus flytrap next to a dime for size comparison.



Guard hairs  
Trigger hairs



Spoon-leaved sundew



Southern Purple Pitcher Plant



Eastern Fox Squirrel



Carolina Anole

## HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS

The Cape Fear Indians lived in and around the area that is now Carolina Beach State Park, prior to European settlement. Artifacts of the native culture, including pottery fragments, arrowheads and mounds of oyster shells, have been found in the area.

Early attempts at colonization in the area were unsuccessful, due to conflicts with the Cape Fear Indians and pirating. In 1726, a permanent settlement was established along the lower Cape Fear. The newly settled land became an important arena for commerce when the English crown designated the Cape Fear River as one of five official ports of entry. Agricultural and timber products, naval stores, shipping and trade formed the basis of the economy.

Sugarloaf, a 50-foot sand dune near the bank of the Cape Fear River, appeared on navigational charts as early as 1738 and was an important landmark for river pilots. The dune was also of strategic significance during the Civil War when, as part of the Confederacy's defense of the port of Wilmington, about 5,000 troops camped on or near Sugarloaf during the siege of Fort Fisher.

Carolina Beach State Park was established in 1969 to preserve the unique environment along the intracoastal waterway.

The park is located on a triangle of land known as Pleasure Island, which lies between the Atlantic Ocean and the Cape Fear River. The land became an island in 1930 when Snow's Cut was dredged, connecting Myrtle Grove Sound to the Cape Fear River. Snow's Cut, a part of the Intracoastal Waterway, provides inland passage for boat traffic along the Atlantic coast.



Sugarloaf



Park Office, 1975



Marina, 1980

NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS

Naturally Wonderful