Welcome to Kodiak Area

Alaska State Parks

For More Information

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"Alaska State Parks" on Facebook

Kodiak History

For at least 7,500 years, the Kodiak Archipelago has been home to the Alutiiq people, who depend on its natural abundance.

Russian traders, drawn to Alaskan waters by huge sea otter populations, established their first permanent settlement in North America at Three Saints Bay in 1784. This settlement, near the present-day village of Old Harbor, moved to the site of present-day Kodiak in 1792 and became the center of Russian fur trading. Sea otter populations dwindled due to overhunting, and Russia lost interest in its American claims, eventually selling Alaska to the United States in 1867.

The effects of World War II on Kodiak can still be seen at Fort Abercrombie SHP and Buskin River SRS, which were fortified as part of a coastal defense system.

Kodiak was hit hard by the 1964 Good Friday Earthquake and tsunami that destroyed much of the waterfront and business district, and wiped out the villages of Old Harbor and Kaguyak.

Today, Kodiak is the center of a commercial fishing industry and a unique draw for explorers who want to experience some of the best Alaska has to offer.

Background photo: Katmai coast from Shuyak Island SP
Photo courtesy of Lisa Hupp

Welcome

Alaska's "emerald isle" is just as verdant and striking as its name suggests, and visiting Kodiak's state parks will reveal some of the best parts of its natural splendor.

The remote parks: Shuyak Island State Park (SP), Afognak Island State Park, and Woody Island State Recreation Site (SRS), offer secluded getaways, backcountry fishing and hunting, and untouched wilderness. Fort Abercrombie State Historical Park (SHP) includes the ruins of a WWII-era Army installation, within a deep spruce forest surrounded by one of the island's most scenic coastlines. Buskin River SRS and Pasagshak River SRS offer some of the best fishing on Kodiak.

Wherever you end up, you're sure to have an experience you'll never forget. You just haven't seen Alaska until you've seen Kodiak.

Explore Kodiak

Packrafting
Public-Use Cabins
Bird Watching
Whale Watching
Fishing
Wildlife Viewing
Hiking
Photography
Hunting
Camping
Kayaking
Solitude
Tracking
Relaxing
Berry Picking

Background photo: Light, mist, and trees at Fort Abercrombie SHP
Photo courtesy of Steve Neel

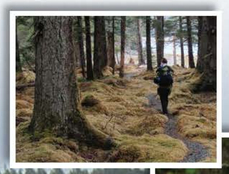
Area Highlights

Wildlife

The Kodiak Archipelago is home to many kinds of wildlife, ranging in size from the little brown bat to the famous Kodiak brown bear. The Kodiak bear is the only large mammal native to the island, but in the past century, Sitka black-tailed deer, mountain goats, and reindeer have been successfully introduced. Afognak Island has a healthy population of introduced Roosevelt elk that occasionally swim across to Kodiak Island.

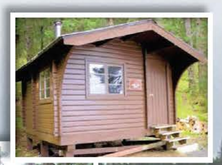
Humpback, fin, gray, and killer whales frequent these waters, and other aquatic mammals, such as harbor seals, sea lions, and sea otter can be seen along the coastline. There are also tremendous birdwatching opportunities, with over 95 species frequenting Fort Abercrombie SHP alone.

Kodiak bear (*Ursus arctos middendorffi*) with salmon
Photo courtesy of Greg Wilker
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, National Digital Library



Lagoon Loop at Shuyak Island SP

Picking blueberries at Fort Abercrombie SHP
Photo courtesy of Dake Schmidt



Laura Lake Cabin at Afognak Island SP

Mulcahy View Cabin at Shuyak Island SP

Fishing and Hunting

The waters around Kodiak are renowned for their great fishing, and Kodiak's state parks offer great places to land your catch. At Pasagshak and Buskin River you can fish for Dolly Varden, sockeye, pink, chum, and silver salmon. If you want to avoid the crowd, Fort Abercrombie has great lake fishing, and all the remote parks have great fishing spots if you're willing to look.

Shuyak Island SP and Afognak Island SP are popular with hunters looking to test their skills. Licenses are required for all hunting. Please consult current Alaska Department of Fish and Game regulations at www.adfg.alaska.gov before you begin your trip.

On the Water

Always wear a life jacket. The waters around Kodiak Archipelago are cold and can be rough at times. When conditions are poor, be patient. Carry emergency communication and signaling devices on your person, plus food, water, and spare clothing for unexpected delays. File a float plan with family or a close friend describing your trip plan, boat, gear, and the size of the party. For more information on safe boating, visit www.alaskaboatingsafety.org.

Kayaking at Shuyak Island State Park
Photo courtesy of Lisa Hupp

A park naturalist teaches about the colorful and diverse wildlife in the intertidal zone.
Photo courtesy of Jack Ransom

Be Bear Aware

Kodiak is bear country. Even if you don't see a bear, you'll never be far from one. Bears are curious, intelligent, and potentially dangerous animals, but undue fear of bears can endanger both bears and people. By following these guidelines, you can avoid a risky encounter.

- Avoid surprising bears; look for signs of bears and make plenty of noise.
- Avoid crowding bears; respect their "personal space."
- Avoid attracting bears through improper handling of food or garbage.
- Plan ahead; stay calm; identify yourself; don't run.

Firearms should never be used as an alternative to common sense. Defensive aerosol sprays containing capsicum (red pepper extract) have been used with success as protection against bears.

Camping

Fort Abercrombie SHP has walk-in and small drive-in campsites with fire rings, picnic tables, toilets, and a centrally located water pump. Buskin River SRS has sites suitable for RV campers, and Pasagshak River SRS has undeveloped campsites available on a first-come, first-served basis. Backcountry camping is allowed in the parks on Shuyak, Afognak, and Woody islands. Please practice leave-no-trace camping, and use bear-resistant containers to cache your food away from your campsite.

Public-Use Cabins

The Kodiak area offers some of the most scenic and secluded public-use cabins in Alaska. There are cabins on Afognak Island and Shuyak Island that can be reserved for a truly remote wilderness experience. These cabins are popular with hunters, and can only be reached by boat or floatplane. For reservations and informational fact sheets for each cabin, visit www.alaskastateparks.org.

A curious red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) scans the landscape
Photo courtesy of Kris Pringle

Sitka black-tailed deer
(*Odocoileus hemionus sitkensis*)
Photo courtesy of Steve Hillebrand
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service,
National Digital Library

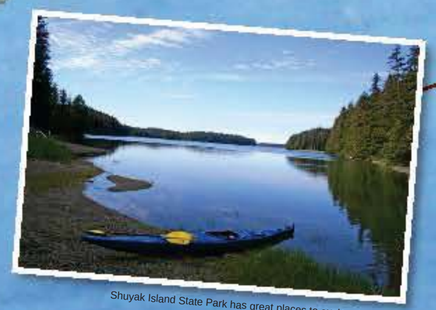
Background photo: View of Eagle Cape at Shuyak Island State Park

Landing on the beach at Shuyak Island.

Getting There

Shuyak Island SP, Afognak Island SP, and Woody Island SRS are only accessible by boat or airplane. Air charters, water taxi services, and boat rentals are available in Kodiak.

Check the Kodiak webpage at www.alaskastateparks.org for a list of authorized commercial air and water taxi services.



Shuyak Island State Park has great places to explore by kayak.
Photo courtesy of Lisa Hupp

Shuyak Island State Park

Shuyak Island State Park, roughly 54 miles north of Kodiak, comprises most of the island's 47,000 acres, except for a few small private parcels. Shuyak Island is part of a coastal forest system, which is unique to the Kodiak Archipelago and contains only one tree species, Sitka spruce.

This compact, 12-mile wide island contains more sheltered interior waterways than anywhere in the Kodiak Archipelago. The park's waters host sea otters, whales, harbor seals, sea lions, Dall's porpoises, and an amazing variety of seabirds. Kodiak brown bear and Sitka black-tailed deer inhabit the island's forests.

Shuyak Island State Park

SHUYAK ISLAND

Shuyak Strait

Perenosa Bay

Tonki Bay

Afognak Island State Park

Izhut Bay

AFOGNAK ISLAND

Shelikof Strait

Marmot Bay

Area of Map

N
W E
S

Kodiak

WOODY ISLAND

Chiniak Bay

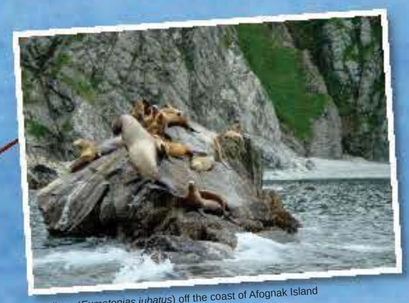
KODIAK ISLAND

Ugak Bay

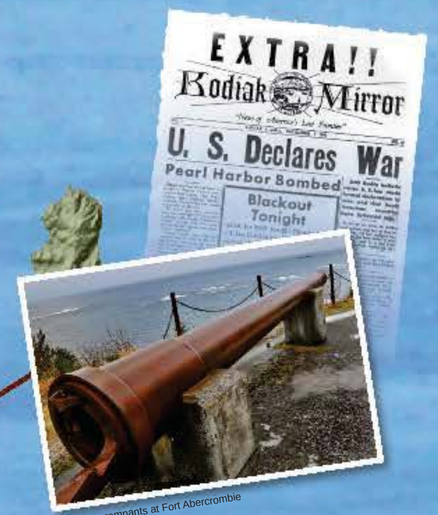
This map is not intended for use as a navigational aid.

Legend

- Ranger Station
- Hiking
- Camping
- Walk-In Camping
- RV Camping
- Public-Use Cabin
- Fishing
- Multi-Use Trail
- Interpretive Trail
- Hunting
- Kayaking
- Picnic Shelter
- Area Managed by Alaska State Parks



Sea lions (*Eumetopias jubatus*) off the coast of Afognak Island
Photo courtesy of Nancy Heise



Naval gun remnants at Fort Abercrombie
Photo courtesy of Steve Neel

Kayakers head to shore at Woody Island
Photo courtesy of Lisa Hupp

Buskin Beach
Photo courtesy of Lisa Hupp

Campers at Pasagshak

Afognak Island State Park

Identified in 1892 as one of the nation's first conservation areas, Afognak Island was originally designated as the Afognak Forest and Fish Culture Reserve because of its outstanding wildlife and salmon habitat value. Over 75,000 acres of the island were purchased as state park lands to protect and restore habitat lost due to the 1989 Exxon Valdez Oil Spill. Since then, the state has purchased additional land also managed as part of this park. Afognak Island is known for its rugged topography, dense old-growth Sitka spruce forests, and salmon-spawning habitat. Kodiak brown bear, Sitka black-tailed deer, Roosevelt elk, and the endangered marbled murrelet inhabit the park.

Fort Abercrombie State Historical Park

Of all the places in Alaska, few have the wealth of wildlife, scenery, and history that Fort Abercrombie SHP offers. Home to the Kodiak Military History Museum, the park encompasses the ruins of a World War II coastal defense installation. The steep, surf-pounded cliffs, deep spruce forests, and wildflower-laden meadows offer a unique opportunity to learn about Kodiak's role in the events of World War II, while enjoying the natural beauty of the island. Great camping, lake fishing, and trails make this park a must-see when you visit Kodiak.

Woody Island State Recreation Site

Located east of Kodiak, Woody Island SRS encompasses 112 acres of wilderness on the north end of the island. This undeveloped park is a great place for kayakers and backcountry campers who want to get off the beaten path. Home for centuries to the Alutiiq-speaking people who call themselves Tangirnarmiut, "the people of Tangirnaq," Woody Island served as a staging ground for military communications during World War II. The site of the former military post is now home to a summer camp that covers much of the island south of the park. Most of Woody Island is privately owned; please respect private property and obtain proper permits before leaving the park area.

Buskin River State Recreation Site

The Buskin River is one of the most productive fisheries on the Kodiak road system and visitors from around the world flock to this river each summer to fish for sockeye and coho salmon. Hikers and mountain bikers can traverse the park's spruce forest using old military roads, which connect deserted WWII-era structures that were once part of Fort Greely. Visitors can expect to see a variety of birds and wildlife including brown bears, eagles, harlequin ducks, and harbor seals.

Pasagshak River State Recreation Site

Pasagshak River, an hour-long drive from Kodiak, is considered one of the outstanding sport-fishing streams on Kodiak Island and hosts annual runs of Dolly Varden, sockeye, pink, chum, and silver salmon. Pasagshak River SRS provides public access to the lower section of Pasagshak River for sport fishing, camping, and picnicking. Besides seasonal salmon runs, Pasagshak Bay supports a rich and varied constellation of land, coastal and marine wildlife, including brown bear, whales, seals, dolphins, sea bird colonies, eagles, overwintering waterfowl, shrimp, and crab.