



# Biscayne

Biscayne National Park  
Florida

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

## On the Mainland

**Convoy Point** The park's mainland center for visitor services is located at Convoy Point. Park headquarters is here, as well as an information station. The information station, which has exhibits and schedules of park activities, is open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Convoy Point also has a picnic area with tables, fire grills, and restrooms. Guided boat trips to the keys and snorkeling tours to the reefs leave from Convoy Point. These tours are operated by the park concessioner.

**Nearby Services and Accommodations** Homestead, Miami, and the Florida Keys have a wide range of hotels and motels; reservations are recommended in winter and early spring. They also have a variety of restaurants, service stations, groceries, and other stores. Everglades National Park, John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park, and other area state parks have

year-round campgrounds. Nearby public marinas provide boat ramps and fuel, and often charter or rent sail and motor boats (see map for locations).

The Greater Miami area and the Florida Keys have the highest concentration of dive shops in the United States. They rent and sell scuba diving and snorkeling equipment, repair gear, and offer snorkeling instruction. If you are getting snorkeling gear, select a face mask that covers only your eyes and nose and comes equipped with a separate breathing tube. Be sure your mask fits snugly.

**Information** For more information, write: Biscayne National Park, P.O. Box 1369, Homestead, FL 33090-1369, or call (305) 247-PARK.

## General Information and Regulations

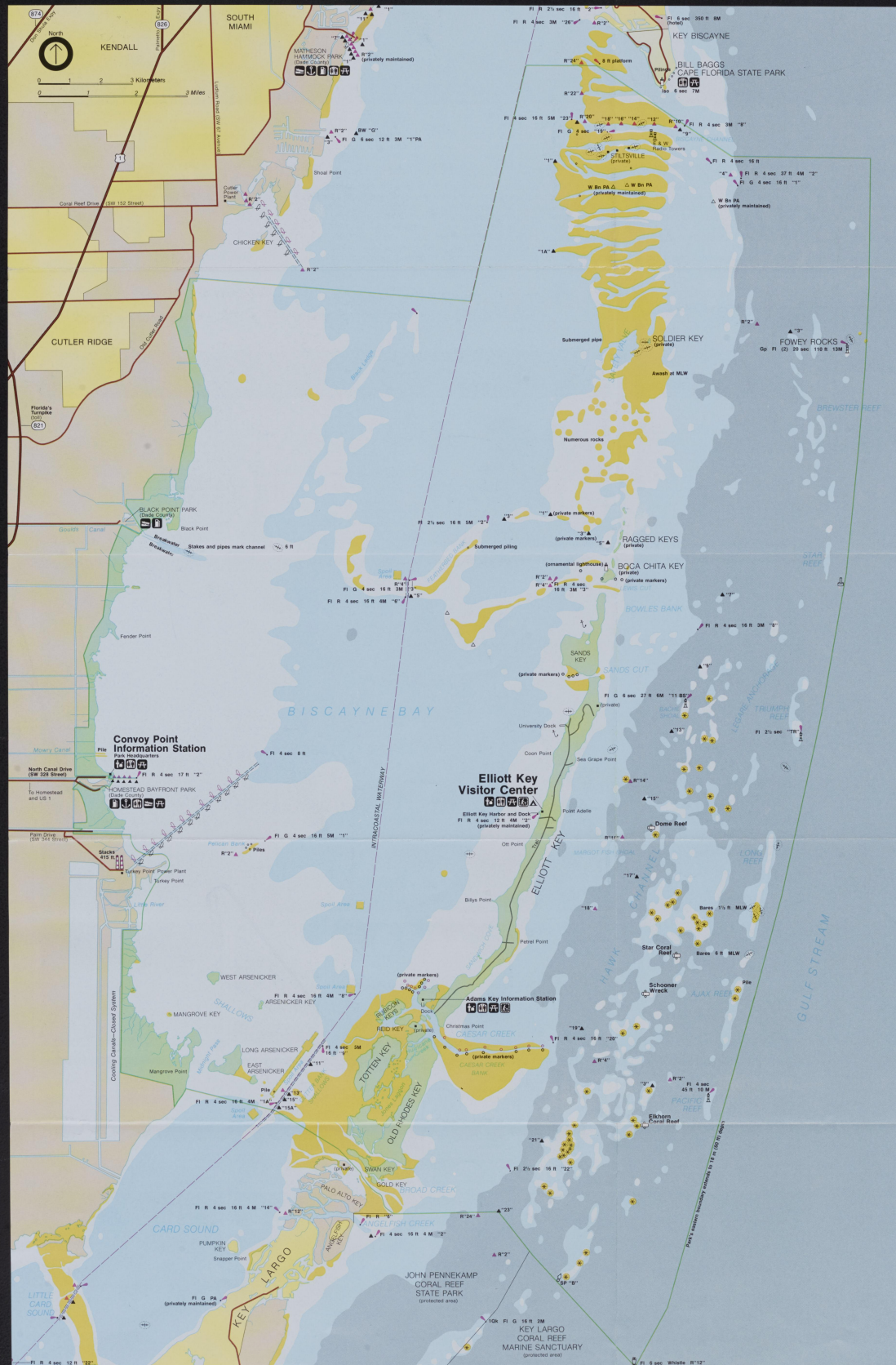
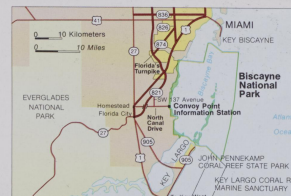
Biscayne has a subtropical climate characterized by warm, wet summers (May through October) and mild, dry winters (November through April). You can expect abundant sunshine and high humidity year-round. High temperatures average in the 30°C (high 80s and low 90s°F) in summer and in the 20°C (mid-70s and low 80s°F) in winter. Annual rainfall fluctuates greatly, but 165 centimeters (65 inches) or more are common. Most rain falls in summer in brief, intense afternoon thunderstorms. Summer is also the peak season for tropical storms and hurricanes.

The park is a wildlife and historical preserve; do not disturb or remove any natural or historical object. Firearms and other weapons and explosives are prohibited. Pets must be physically restrained at all times. Fires are allowed only in campstoves or designated

grills. There are no lifeguarded beaches. If you swim take along a friend. Be careful wading along the shore; coral rock is sharp and animals such as sandy sea urchins live in the shallows. Mosquitoes and other biting insects are year-round residents. Their populations are lowest from January to April. Always carry insect repellent. If you are camping, be sure your tent has bug-proof netting. Wear a waterproof sunscreen to guard against sunburn.

## Getting to the Park

The main north-south highways approaching Biscayne are Florida's Turnpike and U.S. 1. The most direct route to Convoy Point is North Canal Drive (SW 328 St.), U.S. 1 intersects North Canal in Homestead. Driving south on the turnpike you can reach North Canal by taking Tallahassee Road (SW 137 Ave.) south. The rest of the park is accessible only by boat (see map below for boat ramp locations).



## Map Key to Facilities

- Ranger station
- Restrooms
- Picnic area
- Boat launch
- Gas dock
- Marina
- Nature trail
- Primitive campground
- Popular anchorage

## On the Water

The offshore waters of the Atlantic and the more protected area of Biscayne Bay offer a year-round spot for recreation. Saltwater fishing can be enjoyed in all seasons. In the ocean, marlin and sailfish are two popular catches; in the bay, snapper, grouper, sea trout, and Spanish mackerel are caught. A fishing license is not required, but you must obey Florida's regulations on size, number of fish, and method of take. You can take stone crabs in season. Blue crabs can be taken year-round. Lobsters are protected in the bay but can be taken outside. Waterskiing is allowed. Skiers should avoid mooring sites and watch for swimmers and divers.

**Rules and Safety Tips** Be especially careful when boating outside marked channels. Reduce your speed over shoals, reefs, and other shallow areas. Don't let your propeller drag and scar the bay bottom.

**Pressailing Checklist** Before leaving shore check the weather forecast, sea conditions, and tides. Among the gear you should pack are: a U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD), such as a lifejacket, for each passenger, signaling equipment, and enough fuel for a round trip. Another essential is NOAA nautical chart 11451, which shows hazardous areas in detail. Do not use a map at left for navigation. Let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return.

Strong currents are common along the outer reefs and in cuts between the keys. If you leave your boat to swim, be sure it is well-anchored. Don't let currents carry you away from the bay bottom.

Watch for swimmers and divers when nearing a marked boat. Some areas where they might be expected. A diver's flag is flown; stay at least 91 meters (300 feet) away. Each year propellers kill and wound manatees. Be on the lookout for them in the bay, channels, and canals.

## Map Key to Navigational Aids

- Water Depths**
- 0-2 meters (6-12 feet)
  - 2-3.5 meters (6-12 feet)
  - Over 3.5 meters (over 12 feet)
- Shoals and Reefs**
- Shoal or spoil area
  - Coral reef near water surface
  - Coral reef also in deeper below water surface
- Channel Markers (centering from seaward)**
- Starboard-hand marker
  - Port-hand daymarker
  - Starboard-hand marker
  - Port-hand marker
  - Starboard-hand spar
  - Port-hand spar
- Other Aids and Landmarks**
- Flashing light
  - Fixed beacon
  - Lighthouse
  - Moorings buoy
  - Boundary marker
  - Tower
  - White buoy
  - Shipwreck
  - Spherical buoy

## Boating Markers and Flags

- Know these common buoys, signs, and flags. They are essential to safe navigation.
- Channel Markers (centering from seaward)**
- Port (odd-numbered)
  - Starboard (even-numbered)
  - Lights flash green
  - Starboard (even-numbered)
  - Lights flash red
- Regulatory Signs**
- Keep out
  - Danger
  - Speed Limit (No wake-8 kph/5 mph)
- Storm Warning Flags**
- Small craft advisory (32-61 kph/20-35 mph with winds)
  - Gale (62-87 kph/35-47 mph with winds)
  - Storm or whole gale (88-117 kph/55-73 mph with winds)
  - Hurricane (winds 118 kph/74 mph or more)

## On the Keys

The keys can be reached only by boat. Developed recreation areas and services are limited to a few islands. Boat fuel, supplies, and food are not sold on any island but are available at mainland marinas. Drinking water is available only on Elliott Key.

**Elliott Key** Free boat docks are located at Elliott Key Harbor and University Dock. You must make reservations to moor overnight at University Dock; call (305) 247-PARK. Elliott Key Visitor Center is open weekdays and intermittently on weekends. Activity schedules and exhibits are displayed.

A campground with picnic tables and fire grills is open on a first-come, first-served basis. No fee is

charged. Drinking water, restrooms, and showers are nearby. Backcountry camping is allowed by permit only and popular overnight anchorage sites are located offshore. The island also has a self-quieting nature.

**Adams Key** A free boat dock, picnic area, restrooms, and mail are available for day use only. An information station is open intermittently.

**Sands Key** Backcountry camping is allowed by permit only. Popular overnight anchorage sites are located offshore.

**Rules and Safety Tips** The entire park is a wildlife refuge, but the Arsenicker Key is a bird nesting area; do not disturb these keys. West Arsenicker and Arsenicker Keys are closed to the public. If you plan to camp in the backcountry, pick up a free permit at headquarters or Elliott Key Visitor Center. Backcountry camping is allowed only on Elliott and Sands Keys. Be sure to pack out all trash on the keys. Pets must always be kept on a leash no longer than 2 meters (6 feet). Some private property still exists on the keys; please respect owners' rights. A few tropical plants can cause painful itching, so avoid touching plants you don't recognize as harmless.

## On the Reefs

Exploring the reefs is best on calm, sunny days. Both the outer reefs along the park's eastern boundary, and the patch reefs closer to shore, offer opportunities for snorkeling and diving. But strong currents occur on the outer reefs. Unless you are experienced, we recommend that you stay on the calmer patch reefs.

The park sells reef guidebooks at Elliott Key Visitor Center and Convoy Point Information Station. A free "Skin Diver's Guide" to patch reefs marked by blue and white mooring buoys is also available. See map for mooring buoy locations. Ranger-guided snorkeling tours are offered.

**Rules and Safety Tips** Whenever you visit the reefs, exercise caution.

**Protecting Yourself** Snorkelers and divers must display the standard diver's flag to warn boaters of their presence. Be wary of approaching boats; propellers have injured divers. Never fish alone, and always have one person stay on board.

Generally reef animals will not harm you if you leave them alone. It is good practice not to touch anything, even if it looks harmless. Even coral can cause deep, slow-healing cuts. Few barracuda or shark attacks occur, but fish should be considered dangerous and watched carefully. You might want to talk with a ranger

about hazards before venturing out.

**Protecting the Reef** Remember that the reefs are alive. Do not anchor in them; anchors damage the reefs, such as sandy bottom. Avoid disturbing or injuring any reef inhabitants. Standing or sitting on coral, or just grasping it, can break or injure it. Resist the temptation to take home a souvenir; it is illegal and diminishes the reef's beauty for the next visitor. Historical artifacts, such as shipwreck ruins, are protected; do not deface or remove them.