

Destination Tidewater Virginia

Parks Mix History, Natural Wonders

Check Out First Landing and Kiptopeak

When you're looking for access to the Chesapeake Bay, look no further than Virginia State Parks. From boating and fishing, to swimming and scenic views, there are state parks on both sides of the bay offering nearly every type of access.

A natural oasis of 2,888 acres in the heart of Virginia Beach, First Landing State Park offers boating, swimming, nature and history programs, hiking, biking, picnicking, a boat launch, cabins, 19 miles of trails, and beach access far from the commercialized board walk.

The campsites, a short stroll from the shores of the bay, have water and electric hook-ups and nearby access to restrooms and showers.



The yurt at Kiptopeke State Park is the only accommodation of its kind in the state parks system, but there are cabins and campsites as well.

Welcoming Visitors Since 1607

The first visitors to the park were English settlers in 1607, led by Captain Christopher Newport and John Smith. The explorers came ashore here before proceeding up the nearby James River to establish the settlement of Jamestown.

The park was built in the early 1930s by mainly African-American Civilian Conservation Corps workers and was dedicated as Seashore State Park on June 15, 1936. The park is one of the original six Virginia State Parks.

In 1965, the park's natural area was included in the National Register



The Cypress Swamp is just one of the natural attractions at First Landing State Park.

of Natural Landmarks, because of its distinction as the northernmost location on the east coast where subtropical and temperate plants grow and thrive together. A self-guided walking trail leads you past Cyprus trees draped in Spanish moss.

In 1977, the park's trail system was designated as part of the U. S. Department of Interior's National Recreational Trail System. The park is also listed with the National Register of Historic Landmarks.

The park's name was changed in 1997 to First Landing State Park to reflect its heritage as the first place where members of the Virginia Company landed.

In 2008, the park hosted more than 1.7 million visitors, the most in any Virginia State Park.

Kiptopeke on the Shore

Across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, on Virginia's eastern shore, Kiptopeke State Park offers recreational access to the Chesapeake Bay and the chance to explore a unique coastal habitat featuring a major flyway for migratory birds.

Named in honor of the younger brother of a king of the Accawmack Indians who had befriended early English settlers to the area, Kiptopeke means Big Water.

The former ferry pier is now a massive fishing pier. Concrete ships, active during WW II as "Freedom Ships," now serve as a barrier reef and help to provide some of Virginia's finest fishing. A fishing license isn't required to fish from the pier, but there are pier fees for adults and children, and a valid Virginia saltwater fishing license is required to fish from the shore.

The park's southern beach is great for surf fishing and beachcombing. And the nearby launch offers boaters access to the bay and the Atlantic Ocean.

The park has an area for swimming Memorial Day to Labor Day, but strolls along the shore are romantic and enjoyable year round.

Kiptopeke State Park offers family lodges, RV and tent campsites, and a yurt (a modern adaptation of an ancient nomadic shelter, combining a beautiful wood frame and durable, electronically bonded architectural fabric). Functionally speaking, a yurt is a cross between a tent and a cabin. The Kiptopeke yurt, the only of its kind in Virginia's park system, has a spectacular view of the Chesapeake Bay with a large wooden deck, picnic table, and a food preparation table. No smoking, cooking, or pets are allowed in the yurt.

For more information about First Landing State Park or Kiptopeke State Park, or to make reservations in one of the 25 parks with camping facilities or 18 parks with cabins or family lodges, call the Virginia State Parks Reservation Center at 800-933-PARK or visit www.virginiastateparks.gov.

By Jim Meisner

An advertisement for the Virginia Living Museum. It features four black and white photographs of people and animals. The text reads: "Come Alive! VIRGINIA Living Museum". At the bottom, it says: "Newport News • I-64, Exit 258A 757-595-1900 • www.thevlm.org".

An advertisement for Recreation News. It features a vertical stack of text boxes. The top box says: "When business was good, he said he did not need to advertise." The second box says: "When business was bad, he said he could not afford to advertise." The third box says: "For the life of us, we can't remember his name." The fourth box says: "ADVERTISE IN Recreation News". Below that, it says: "Over 100,000 subscribers". At the bottom, it provides contact information: "1713 Grafton Ridge Court, Forest Hill, MD 21050 410-638-6901 Fax: 410-638-6902 e-mail: publisher@recreationnews.com www.recreationnews.com".