

History & Nature

Known as Inlet Beach to the early settlers, the area around Philips Inlet was initially developed as a recreation area in the 1920s. In 1928 Robert E. Hicks purchased 185 acres of land overlooking Philips Inlet, where he built a summer home for his wife, Margaret, who named the compound Loch Lomond.

Construction of the historic lodge and associated buildings was completed before the 1940s. In 1945 Avondale Textile Mills of Sylacauga, Alabama purchased Loch Lomond from the Hicks family, renamed the property Camp Helen, and for 39 years operated a resort destination for their vacationing employees. During that time, 12 duplex cottages and a recreation hall were built. These historic buildings still exist today.

Surrounded by water on three sides, (Gulf of Mexico, Lake Powell and Philips Inlet) the peninsula provides access to the resources of the gulf and Lake Powell. Lake Powell is one of the largest coastal dune lakes in Florida. These only exist along Florida's Gulf coast in the United States and are rare worldwide.

Least terns and snowy plovers nest in the shelly dunes between Philips Inlet and the Gulf of Mexico. Piping plovers, black skimmers, brown pelicans and Caspian terns have been observed foraging and resting along the beach dune and maritime hammock habitats. The beach also provides nesting habitats for loggerhead and green sea turtles.

The park is home to five more distinct natural communities in addition to its developed areas. These communities include mesic flatwoods, scrub, basin swamp, depression marsh, and marine unconsolidated substrate.

Florida State Parks

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

Camp Helen State Park

23937 Panama City Beach Pkwy
Panama City Beach, FL 32413
(850) 233-5059

FloridaStateParks.org

Park Guidelines

- Hours are 8 a.m. until sunset, 365 days a year.
- An entrance fee is required.
- All plants, animals and park property are protected. Collection, destruction or disturbance is prohibited.
- Alcoholic beverage consumption, fireworks and hunting are prohibited.
- Pets are not permitted on the beach. Where allowed, they must be kept on a hand-held leash no longer than 6 feet and well behaved at all times.
- Fishing, boating, swimming and fires are allowed in designated areas only. Lifeguards are not provided. A Florida fishing license may be required.
- Become a volunteer. Inquire at the ranger station.
- For information about joining Friends of Camp Helen, call the park office.
- Florida's state parks are committed to providing equal access to all facilities and programs. Should you need assistance to enable your participation, please contact the ranger station.

Large
Print

Alternate format
available upon
request at any
Florida state park.



FLORIDA
State Parks
*...the Real Florida*SM
Created on 11/14



Northwest
Florida

Camp Helen State Park

*Experience the Beautiful Emerald
Waters of the Gulf of Mexico*



*...the Real Florida*SM



National Gold Medal Winner

Florida State Parks - "America's First Three-Time Winner"

Real Fun in ...the Real FloridaSM

Explore an environment rich in natural and cultural resources at Camp Helen State Park. Discover the history of Inlet Beach. With more than 180 acres, the park protects natural communities along the Gulf of Mexico and Lake Powell, making it the perfect place for fishing, kayaking, hiking, swimming and beachcombing.

Visitors enjoy spending time along the park's many shorelines. Picnicking, swimming and beachcombing are popular. Saltwater fishing is popular in the surf, while both freshwater and saltwater fish can be caught in Lake Powell's brackish water. Canoeing and kayaking provide visitors with a different perspective of the waters surrounding Camp Helen.

Camp Helen offers wonderful opportunities for bird-watching and nature study in its diverse habitats. Camp Helen is listed on Florida's birding trail. Hiking enthusiasts can pick up a complimentary trail guide at the Visitor Center. The trail is well marked with trail signs as well as botanical signs and winds through a dense canopy of maritime hammock overlooking the salt marsh and the Duck Pond with ADA accessible benches along the trail at various points to give the hiker a place to pause and enjoy their surroundings. There is also a trail at the bottom of the bluff that follows the shoreline of Lake Powell to the north side of Camp Helen for those that wish to explore further.

To explore Camp Helen's history and historic structures, a complimentary Walking Tour Guide is available in the Visitor Center to start your adventure after you take in the displays of early Camp Helen history that show Camp Helen's part in the history of the Panhandle.



Directions

Camp Helen State Park is located west of Panama City Beach in Bay County on U.S. 98, 12 miles east of Highway 331 or seven miles west of Highway 79.

