

## History & Nature

Mound Key is a remnant of the Calusa Indian civilization that occupied this region for over 2,000 years. The site likely began as a flat, mangrove-lined oyster bar that barely rose above the shallow waters of the Estero Bay. Located in the center of an estuary, one of nature's most productive ecosystems, food was easy to find. As the population grew, many shellfish were collected for food and the empty shells were heaped into middens that rose above the bay. The Calusa society grew. At its peak, the Calusa kingdom reached from Tampa Bay south through the Ten Thousand Islands and eastward to Lake Okeechobee. The Calusa were known as the "fierce people," and were said to have ruled over all of the other tribes and trade networks throughout South Florida. Mound Key is believed to have been their cultural center.

The Calusa had their first encounters with Europeans in the early 1500s when the Spaniards were exploring the Caribbean and peninsula of Florida. The King of the Calusa received the Spanish colonial governor at this site in 1566. In 1567, the Jesuits founded a short lived mission here called San Antonia de Carlos, in an attempt to convert the Calusa. The mission was abandoned in 1569. Disease and warfare eventually brought an end to the Calusa civilization around 1750.

Since that time, Cuban fishermen, early pioneers to south Florida and homesteaders have made use of Mound Key. In 1926, a hurricane destroyed most of the houses on the island and the last residents departed in 1940. The Koreshan Unity donated the property they owned on the island to the State of Florida in 1961.

### Florida State Parks

Florida Department of Environmental Protection  
Division of Recreation and Parks

#### Mound Key Archaeological State Park

(C/O Koreshan State Historic Site)  
3800 Corkscrew Road  
Estero, Florida 33928  
(239) 992-0311

[FloridaStateParks.org](http://FloridaStateParks.org)

### Park Guidelines

- Hours are 8 a.m. until sunset, 365 days a year.
- All plants, animals, archaeological and historic remains are protected. Collection, destruction or disturbance is prohibited.
- Pets are permitted in the park. Pets must be kept on a hand-held leash no longer than six feet and well behaved at all times.
- Fishing and boating are allowed in designated areas only. A Florida fishing license is required.
- Fireworks, fires, hunting and alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
- 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.

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Florida state park.



**FLORIDA**  
State Parks  
...the Real Florida<sup>SM</sup>



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## Mound Key Archaeological State Park

Capital of the Calusa Kingdom



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**National Gold Medal Winner**

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

## Real Fun in ...the Real Florida<sup>SM</sup>

Framed in forests of mangrove trees, the shell mounds on Mound Key rise more than 30 feet above the waters of Estero Bay. The highest elevation for miles around, the island is almost entirely an artificial creation, resulting from nearly 2,000 years of human activity.

Mound Key is a beautiful place for nature study and to observe Calusa midden mounds. A three-quarter-mile trail traverses the island across several mounds and through mangroves and a tropical hardwood hammock. There are no facilities on the island. There are two boat landings, one at each end of the trail. The landing on the northwest side of the island is most suitable for powered watercraft. The landing on the southeast side of the island is most suitable for canoes and kayaks. The estuarine waters surrounding the island are within the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve and are an excellent place to catch both fresh and saltwater fishes.

Mound Key is accessible only by boat. Two nearby public boat launches are available at Koreshan State Historic Site and Lovers Key State Park.



The map below indicates the location of the main historical features of the island. Not all areas are accessible today.



## Directions

Mound Key is accessible by boat. The coordinates for the main landing on the island are Lat 26° 25m 25.33s, Lon -81° 52m 0.6s

The nearest launching and rental facilities are:

Koreshan State Historic Site, 3800 Corkscrew Road in Estero, (239) 992-0311  
Lovers Key State Park, 8700 Estero Blvd in Fort Myers Beach, (239) 463-4588

