

History & Nature

Tarkiln Bayou Preserve State Park derives its name from the bayou which empties into Perdido Bay. During the 1800s, tar kilns were located on the adjacent peninsula to process the tar removed from southern yellow pines. Visitors can still find an occasional “cat face” in some of the larger pine trees where ceramic pots were used to capture the seeping tar. While pine tar was an important resource for the maritime industry, it was also used in the production of soaps and animal medicines.

Tarkiln’s abundant variety of natural communities promotes nature study and exploration. Visitors can discover wet prairie, tidal marsh, maritime hammock, sandhill and wet flatwoods communities.

Many of these communities are naturally fire-dependent. Look close and you’ll see where fire control lines have been cut in the thick brush or where prescribed fires have been used to reduce the heavy understory, allowing native plants to repopulate the area. These burns mimic lightning fires in their mosaic effect.

In areas where hydrology patterns have been altered, proper restoration is being evaluated and implemented. Visitors may see evidence of restored areas and where native plants have been reintroduced in wetlands. The park also strives to remove non-native (exotic) plants that can displace native species and their habitats. By these methods, staff and volunteers work to develop “a balance of nature” within preserve lands.

Florida State Parks

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

Tarkiln Bayou Preserve State Park

c/o Big Lagoon State Park
12301 Gulf Beach Highway
Pensacola, FL 32507
Phone: (850) 492-1595

FloridaStateParks.org

Park Guidelines

- Hours of operation are 8 a.m. to one half hour before sunset, 365 days a year.
- An entrance fee may be required.
- The collection, destruction or disturbance of plants, animals or park property is prohibited.
- Pets are permitted in designated areas only.
- Pets must be kept on a hand-held leash no longer than six feet and well behaved at all times.
- Fireworks and hunting are prohibited.
- A Florida fishing license may be required.
- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
- Become a volunteer. Inquire at the Big Lagoon State Park Ranger Station.
- For information about joining Friends of Pensacola State Parks visit www.pensacolastateparks.org.
- 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 at (850) 492-1595.

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Tarkiln Bayou Preserve State Park

Protecting the endangered pitcher plants



...the Real FloridaSM



National Gold Medal Winner

Florida State Parks - “America’s First Three-Time Winner”

Real Fun in ...the Real FloridaSM

Originally purchased as the Perdido Pitcher Plant Prairie under a Florida Forever land acquisition in 1998, Tarkiln Bayou Preserve State Park was a mere 900 acres. Since then, Tarkiln Bayou Preserve has expanded to more than 4,200 acres and protects many rare and endangered plant species, including some of the larger stands of white-topped pitcher plants in Florida. These remnant wet prairies also support nearly 100 other wetland species along the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico and enhances the water quality of Perdido Bay.

This preserve offers hiking, wildlife viewing and picnicking along the half-mile accessible Tarkiln Bayou Trail. The sidewalk and elevated boardwalk meanders through prairie, cypress and titi forests. Benches along the trail provide areas for reflection. When the trail ends, the observation area provides a scenic view of the bayou. Nature photography is very popular during the spring and fall wildflower displays.

A small parking area, composting toilet and picnic shelter with an informational kiosk provides visitors a starting place to enjoy the park. Guided walks are offered seasonally and upon special request for groups.

For the adventurous, a rugged 6.5-mile Perdido Bay trail provides access to the bayshore beach. This trail crosses seepage streams and muddy areas as it makes its way through the oaks and pines.



Directions

Tarkiln Bayou Preserve State Park is located in Escambia County about 1.5 miles south of the intersection of U.S. 98 and County Road 293.

