

Welcome and Introduction

Isle Royale National Park is an island wilderness located in the northwest portion of Lake Superior. Over 99% of the park is designated Wilderness, and it is a U. S. Biosphere Reserve. The majority of the park's visitors journey to the park to hike, backpack, or travel the waterways of the Island by canoe, kayak, or motorboat.

The Island itself is 45 miles long and 8.5 miles wide at its widest point; the park boundary extends 4.5 miles into Lake Superior. Isle Royale has 36 campgrounds and 165 miles of hiking trails. Less than 20 species of mammals are found on the Island, including gray wolf, moose, red squirrel, beaver, and fox. Over 160 species of birds have been sighted in the park, of which 100 nest on the island. Isle Royale has over 700 species of flowers, trees and ferns, including 32 orchid species.

The group camping office has been assisting groups visiting Isle Royale National Park for several years and has written this brochure to answer some of the most commonly asked questions. You will be assuming a great responsibility when you come to Isle Royale and we want you to have a safe and enjoyable experience. Please feel free to contact us if you have further questions.

Group Camping Summary

- **Advance reservations are required for group camping parties.** A group is a party of 7-10 individuals, including leaders. **No group may be larger than 10 people.** If your party exceeds 10, you must split into two groups, each independent and traveling on completely separate itineraries. Both groups are required to obtain advance permits.
- **Groups are required to follow a set travel itinerary based on campsites that have been reserved.** Groups are limited to camping at the group tent sites – three sided shelters or individual tent sites are not to be used by groups.
- **A non-refundable processing fee of \$25 is charged for each permit issued.**
- **A user fee of \$4.00 per person per day applies to all visitors 12 years of age and older.** Children 11 and under are exempt. The user fee is collected by the transportation services.
- **No one organization can have more than 20 people on the Island at any given time and cannot exceed 80 visitors per year.**
- **Commercial groups must obtain an Incidental Business Permit issued by Isle Royale National Park for the current season.** Any operation providing goods, activities, or services to the general public



Isle Royale National Park Map

close map

print map



Do not use this map for navigation. Use Boating and Eastern Harbors charts.



[Park Directions Page »](#)



Windigo Area Guide



A Portal to Wilderness

A warm breeze blows through the maples and birches, a splash echoes across the water as a cow moose wades into the protected harbor, an osprey circles overhead. This is the edge of Wilderness. Welcome...

A Community Carved from the Wild

Step one hundred years into the past and imagine living in this isolated outpost year round. A community of 135 worked and played on the island's west end; although the forest has grown and hidden much of the evidence, a discerning eye may discover remnants of the people who once lived here.

The Wendigo Mining Company operated from their headquarters, which was located just behind the Windigo Visitor Center, from 1890-1892. Workers and their families braved the isolation and long winter months in hopes that a workable deposit of copper would be found - it never was. After these few brief years this

bustling mining company port and the small settlement of Wendigo fell silent, ending the last attempt to mine copper from Isle Royale.

The network of old mining roadways stretching between Huginnin Cove and Lake Desor now serve as pathways into Isle Royale's Wilderness. As you follow these trails, you walk in the footprints of those who came before. Look carefully, rusty nails, rotted timbers and broken clay pipes all have stories to tell: stories of those who called this place "home" in a time not so long ago.

Members Only

If you wanted to visit Windigo in the early 1900s, you needed to carry a membership card! The Washington Club, a group of Duluth businessmen, used this area as a private retreat. They relaxed in their club house, the former headquarters for the mining company; and tried their luck hunting caribou and other game. They

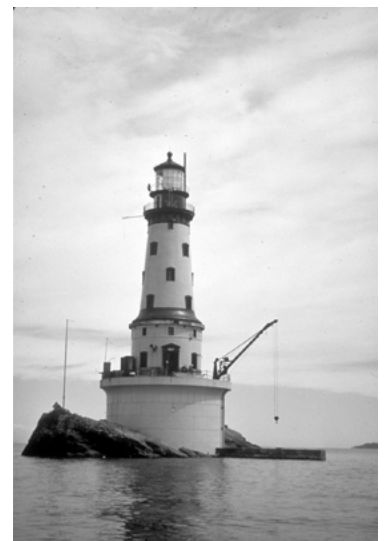
even had white-tailed deer imported to the island! The deer and caribou are gone and so is the club. Only the building's foundation, beside the present day Windigo store, remains.

A Guiding Beacon

Captains navigating the western passage around Isle Royale must have breathed a sigh of relief after passing the warning light of the Rock of Ages Lighthouse, a double flash every ten seconds that could be seen for almost 20 miles.

Among the most remote life stations on the continent, the light was "home" to keepers who lived there for months at a time, protecting vessels from the dangers of the surrounding shallow reef.

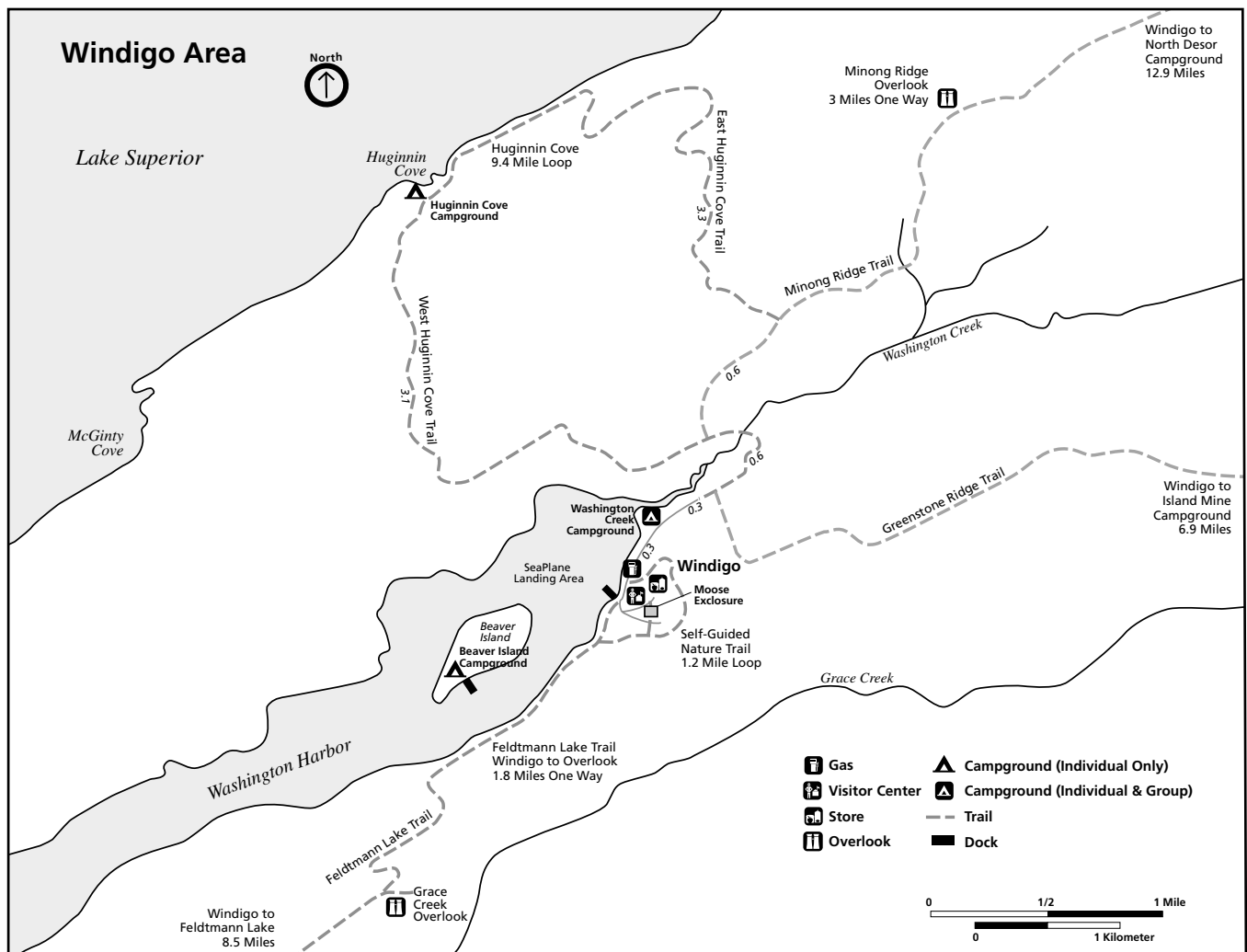
The light's second-order Fresnel lens was the largest sized lens used on the Great Lakes. View this magnificent lens at the Windigo Visitor Center. It was relocated to Windigo in 1985 when the Coast Guard installed a new battery-powered solar beacon.



No Moose Allowed!

Isle Royale supports a large population of moose. In 1995 an amazing 2400 moose were estimated to be on the Island! Near the Windigo Store, you can witness the effect that these large herbivores have on the Island's vegetation. A fenced-in enclosure, installed in 1979, was designed to keep moose out.

The difference between the "moose-free" enclosure and the surrounding forest landscape is dramatic. While current populations of moose are smaller, they still continue to have enormous impact on the Island.



Discoveries Await

The southwestern end of Isle Royale National Park offers a variety of activities designed to enhance your park experience. Drop by the Windigo Visitor Center to view displays, browse publications, receive your backcountry permit, check the interpretive program

schedule, or have your questions answered. Explore the trails, relax on the deck of the Windigo Store or take a dip in the often chilly, but refreshing waters of Washington Harbor.

Short Trips

Grace Creek Overlook 3.6 mile roundtrip

This scenic trail skirts the Washington Harbor shoreline through the boreal forest, thick with lichens, and then cuts inland. As the trail climbs higher, forests of mature hardwoods give way to an open ridge top. Follow the ridge then turn on the small spur trail leading to a rocky outcropping for a view of the Island's interior and Lake Superior's Grace Harbor. Follow the Feldtmann Lake Trail which begins near the main dock. Return to Windigo by retracing your steps.

Windigo Nature Trail 1.2 mile loop

Explore the varied forest environments of Windigo as you stroll along this gently rolling trail. Traverse fern-filled cedar lowlands, wander through hardwood forests of maple and birch and watch for evidence of wildlife in the boreal forest. Pick up a trail guide at the Visitor Center to deepen your understanding of this diverse area.

Trail begins up the hill past the Visitor Center.

Other Adventures

Minong Ridge Overlook 6 mile roundtrip

For those who seek adventure, the Minong Ridge offers a challenging trip. Although the entire trail stretches 26 miles to McCargo Cove, the day-hiker can experience a portion of this rugged trail. Beyond the Washington Creek and Huginnin Cove trail junctions, the route drops into marshes rich with signs of beaver and moose. The route becomes rocky as you climb through a pine forest. Follow the ups and downs of the ridge until the forest opens to a spectacular view of flat-topped Pie Island and the rest of the Canadian shoreline.

Huginnin Cove Loop 9.4 mile roundtrip

Follow this picturesque trail which weaves over ridges, through wetlands and along the Lake Superior shoreline. At the trail junction beyond the bridge over Washington Creek, choose either fork. Travel through planked cedar swamps, discover the remnants of an historic mine exploration site, watch for wildlife near beaver ponds and enjoy the views of Canada from the rocky cliffs and cobble beaches. Bring along a day pack including lunch, a day's supply of water, and rain gear on this all day adventure through Isle Royale's Wilderness.

Washington Harbor Canoe or Kayak

The calm protected waters of Washington Harbor are ideal for a leisurely paddle. Head out to Beaver Island, explore Washington Creek or just cruise along the shoreline. Opportunities for wildlife viewing abound as mergansers, otters and moose all reside in the harbor. Canoe and kayak rentals are available at the Windigo Store.

