

Goose Island State Park, Texas

Goose Island State Park is located near Lamar, Texas, just north of Rockport along Highway 35. The park is situated on a point of land adjacent to Copano, Aransas and St. Charles Bays making it a true fisherman's paradise.

From San Antonio, take I-37 to Corpus Christi and turn NE on Highway 35/181. Highway 35 meanders through several towns including Fulton, so follow directions carefully. Also, be aware that some GPS systems lock onto Palmetto Street in Fulton and misdirect you. So be sure to turn left (North) in Fulton and continue out of town and across the long causeway to Lamar. Turn right just after the causeway at the gas station on Park Road 13.

The park provides standard Texas State Park amenities including power and water at each campsite, but unlike most, has no full hookup sites available.

There are two major areas in which to camp, an inland area and a beach front section. The inland camp sites varied greatly in appearance. The outer loop camp sites were hacked out of thick brush looking almost like a well trimmed hedge all around the site. They are secluded and very private. Some of the inner road sites are much more open and therefore amenable to group camping. There are tons of trees and plenty of shade available in all these areas. There are several restrooms available and they were clean, well kept and within a short walk.

There were also campsites available on a narrow strip along the beach. Those sites had few trees and only a small concrete shelter at each site. The individual sites were much closer together, giving you the feeling that you were camping right on top of your neighbor. But these sites appeared very popular nevertheless.

Goose Island State Park is also known for the "Big Tree", a magnificent giant Live Oak estimated at over 1000 years old and having a circumference over 35 feet. It appears prominently on their website and even on patches available at the camp store. It's located a short drive outside the main gates of the camping area and is worth the side trip.



The "Big Tree" at Goose Island State Park

As for recreation, the park has some walking/biking trails, bird watching, which is reputed to be excellent, and some play areas for the kids.

But honestly the park truly only has one major attraction and that is fishing. During my stay, nearly every site had a boat. The park provides a nice boat ramp and fish cleaning stations. To properly fish the local bays, you need a boat that doesn't draft very deep. Every bay in the area is extremely shallow. The majority of the time we were fishing, the water depth was between 2 and 6 feet with the shallower being more prevalent. Traversing the region by boat can be nerve wracking as the water was so shallow we often touched bottom in our pontoon boat that only drafts 1 foot or so. Our depth finder was so confused by the shallowness that it often just blinked at us refusing to lock on to the bottom. Several neighboring fishermen had airboats and other flat bottom boats that probably worked slightly better. Even so, our neighbor's airboat grounded and they had to wait for rescue in the morning. Even the dredged channel was only 3 feet deep but allowed sufficient clearance to get out into the bay.

Goose Island also has a long fishing pier off which we spent many hours fishing in 1-3 feet of water. In fact, I'm pretty sure we could have walked out halfway across the bay and not been in over our heads.

The Park claims it has a park store, but the 'store' is really just a few trinkets available at the front office. They have some clothing, patches and limited firewood available. Fortunately there's a real store back at the gas station where you turned off Hwy 35. Just beyond that store towards the causeway is a very good bait shop where you can pick up anything you need for fishing.

Overall the park is nice, very quiet and an excellent place to kick off a fishing trip.

Jim Bray

Goose Island State Park web site: http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/goose_island/