Sand Harbor
Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park

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WELCOME TO SAND HARBOR

With 55 acres of long sandy beaches, rocky coves, shady forested areas and panoramic lake views, Sand Harbor offers visitors unparalleled opportunities to enjoy Lake Tahoe.

Harbor History

The resources of Tahoe's east shore were prized by Native Americans long before Europeans made their discovery of the lake. The Washo Tribe spent summers at Sand Harbor fishing, hunting and gathering.

By the early 1880s, lumber baron Walter Scott Hobart had established operations for the Sierra Nevada Wood & Lumber Company at Sand Harbor. Cut timbers from around the lake were towed into the harbor behind the Steamship Niagara, then sent by railway car to the SNW&L Co. sawmill in Incline. Towards the end of the 19th century, timber along the east lakeshore became scarce and the operation was moved to Truckee.

Following the death of his father in 1892, Walter Scott Hobart Jr. inherited his family's wealth and land holdings. He exhausted much of his acquired fortune on a lavish summer resort along the shores of Sand Harbor. Hobart entertained Hollywood royalty and the social elite aboard his yacht, the Quic Chakidn, until it was commandeered by the U.S. Navy during WWII.

In the early 1920s, Hobart leased the master cottage at Sand Harbor to Frank W. Fuller, Vice President of the W.P. Fuller & Company paint firm. His son, Frank Jr., and family continued to enjoy summers at the harbor until 1966. Fuller Jr. had a passion for flying and moored his Gruman Goose seaplane, and later his Gruman Mallard seaplane, on the shores of Sand Harbor. Boaters enjoyed the spectacle of watching Fuller's planes lift gracefully out of the water and rise above the lake.

Born to one of San Francisco's wealthiest families, George Whittell Jr. lived off the millions inherited from his parents. He avoided the 1929 stock market crisis (and some believe contributed to it), by liquidating $50 million in stock holdings just months before the crash. George moved his fortune to Nevada, and during the early 1930s, he purchased most of the east side of Lake Tahoe. His land holdings included Sand Harbor (purchased from Hobart Jr.), where he planned to build a casino. Between 1936 and 1939 Whittell focused on the construction of his own magnificent summer estate, the Thunderbird Lodge, which was also home to his famous yacht, Thunderbird, and a variety of big game animals. The historic estate is visible to the south of Sand Harbor, and beach visitors can still catch a glimpse of the Thunderbird yacht cruising by on warm summer evenings.

As the years passed, George grew more reclusive, gradually abandoning his development plans for Tahoe's east shore in favor of maintaining his own private hideaway. During the 1950s, the State of Nevada began negotiations with Whittell to purchase land along the east shore of Lake Tahoe for a state park.

In 1958, Whittell reluctantly agreed to lease a portion of his lakeshore property at Sand Harbor to the State of Nevada for public use. A decade later, judicial action forced him to sell 5,000 acres. This land acquisition became the foundation for Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park. Grand opening ceremonies were held in 1971, and now, early in the 21st century, more than one million visitors enjoy the park annually.

FACILITIES AND FEATURES

VISITOR CENTER: The Sand Harbor visitor center and gift shop is available for self-guided tours with informative displays and regional information. A snack bar and grill concession offers snacks and drinks on a relaxing, shady deck.

SWIMMING AND SCUBA DIVING: Gently sloping beaches, crystal-clear water and interesting rock formations allow for wonderful swimming and scuba diving. Beach Patrol is on duty from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

PICNICKING: Located in the shade of the cedars and Jeffrey pines, the picnic area offers a peaceful retreat from the busy beaches. Each site is equipped with a barbecue and picnic table. Paved walkways make the area accessible to persons with disabilities.

SAND HARBOR TO MEMORIAL POINT TRAIL: The short, half-mile trail offers a link to Memorial Point and provides access to many secluded beach and rock areas.

SAND POINT NATURE TRAIL: The one-third-mile Sand Point Nature Trail is a handicap-accessible trail with interpretive signs and breathtaking views of Lake Tahoe.

GROUP AREA/RAMADA: A group-use area set on a pine-dotted, rocky point accommodates groups of up to 100 people. The covered facility is equipped with electricity, water and tables and includes a large barbecue. Use is by reservation only.

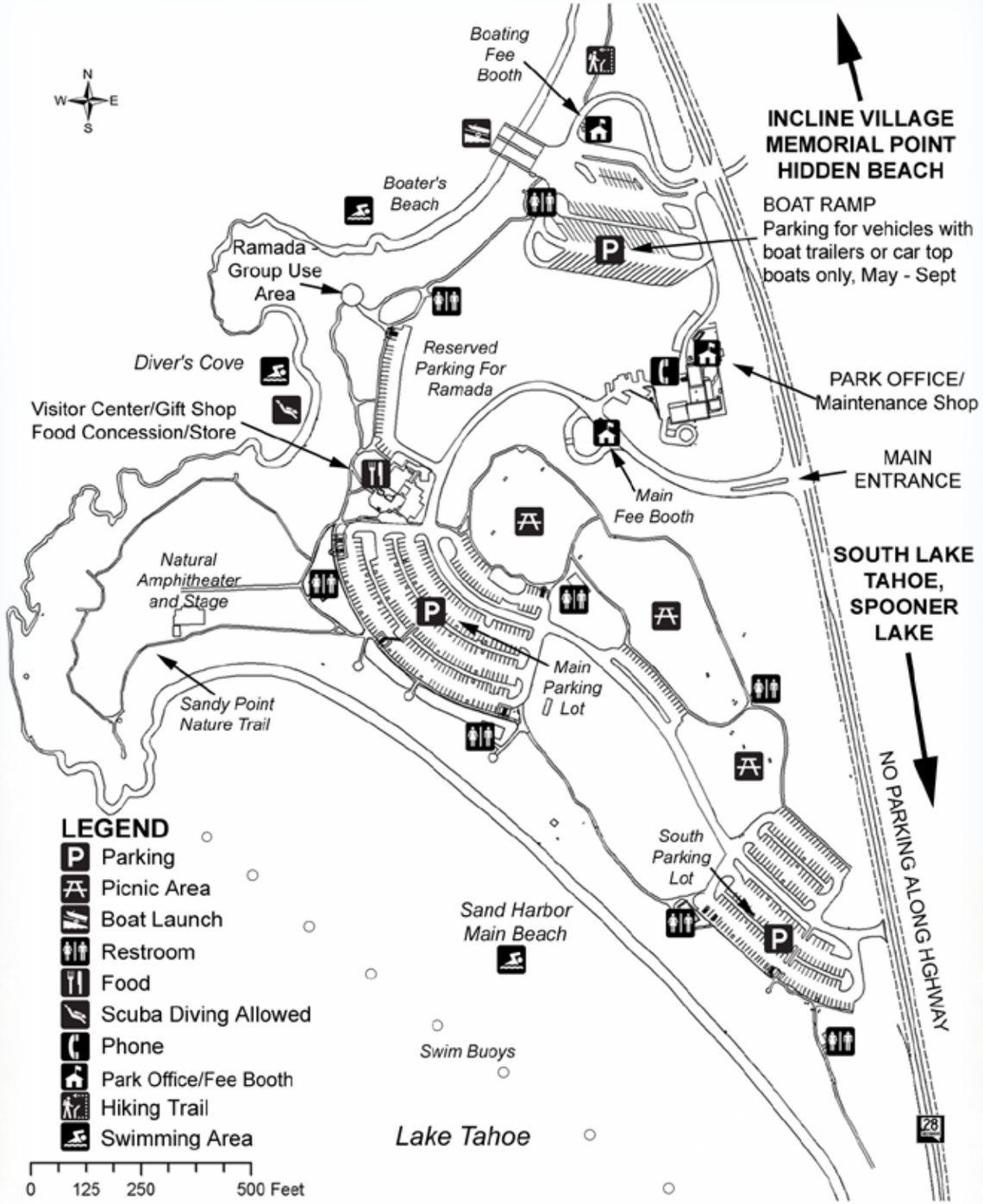
BOATING: The boat launch includes two wave protected double ramps with docks and adjacent parking. Parking fills to capacity early on summer weekends. Watercraft inspections are required as part of the new program that is helping to protect Lake Tahoe from the threat of aquatic invasive species such as Quagga and Zebra mussels.

LAKE TAHOE SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL: During July and August, the Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival at Sand Harbor offers the Bard's best plays set against the awe-inspiring backdrop of Lake Tahoe.

REMINDERS

Please join the majority of park visitors in keeping Sand Harbor safe and clean by observing the following:

- No bottles are allowed in waterfront areas
- Fires permitted in designated areas only
- No pets are allowed
- Stay on trails
- No camping is allowed at Hwy. 28 beaches
- Leave no trace
- Plants, animals, rocks, minerals and artifacts are protected by state law
- Litter must be properly disposed.

Visitors are responsible for knowing all park rules and regulations. Detailed park rules are posted at the park.

NOTE: Sand Harbor's popularity can make it difficult to enter during peak periods. The parking lots are often full from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on summer weekends and weekdays during July and August.