

Video	Audio
	<p>>>MALE NARRATOR: Georgia's coastline is one of her most distinctive features and each of her barrier islands has special features that makes it unique. We hear often about Tybee Island and St. Simon's Island, but what about Little Tybee or Little St. Simon's? We'll explore these and others of our Golden Isles, coming up next!</p>
	<p>NARRATOR: GEORGIA'S COAST IS MAGNIFICENT STRETCH OF SEVENTEEN BARRIER ISLANDS REACHING FROM TYBEE ISLAND TO CUMBERLAND ISLAND. FOUR OF THE LARGER BARRIER ISLANDS ARE DEVELOPED, BUT THE OTHERS ARE MOSTLY UNTAMED. THEIR WILDNESS IN THIS AGE OF DEVELOPMENT IS THE RESULT OF THE EFFORTS OF MANY PEOPLE. THOUGH YOU MAY NOT KNOW MUCH ABOUT THEM, THEY ARE EVERY BIT AS IMPORTANT AS THE ISLANDS WE THINK OF FIRST WHEN SOMEONE MENTIONS GEORGIA'S GOLDEN ISLES.</p>
	<p>>>McCuean: Georgia is so fortunate because it has the most protected coast of any state on the eastern seaboard. In fact, I think it's forty percent of the marsh system left on the eastern seaboard is found in Georgia, and when you add South Carolina in, it's like sixty to seventy percent of the marshes are protected. And so in that you have Georgia with this string of pearls of these barrier islands that are under land conservation protection by many different conservation agencies and families.</p> <p>>>Narrator: It is fitting that we humans work to protect our barrier islands, because the name barrier islands illustrates that they are protecting us. The mainland's first line of defense against storms is these smaller landmasses. By keeping their natural flora intact the islands are better able to withstand the wind and water hurricanes bring, but that doesn't mean they stay the same. The shapes and sizes of the barriers are constantly changing under the influences of winds, waves, and tidal currents making them dynamic features of our coast. Development on islands can become problematic because the natural shift of sands is disrupted. For this reason, even the developed islands have limits placed on the percentage of development allowed.</p>

	<p>>>McCuean: The developed islands are Tybee Island from Savannah, and St. Simon's and Jekyll Island and Sea Island out of the Brunswick area. And, each of those islands have also done some level of conservation on those islands because they realize the value of having this wonderful beach or the march or the sand dunes.</p>
	<p>>>NARRATOR: ONE ISLAND ENTIRELY DEVOID OF DEVELOPMENT IS LITTLE TYBEE. A 7,000-acre barrier island laced with tidal creeks and rivers, LITTLE TYBEE is largely salt marsh with some forested upland areas. This island can be accessed by sea kayak and makes a wonderful day trip. Here can be seen excellent examples of dunes and marsh as well as maritime forest. We took a beginner-style day-trip with Dale Williams and Marcia Henson of Sea Kayak Georgia to get a better look.</p>
	<p>>>Henson: When we, when we go to Little Tybee, we launch from alley number three from Tybee Island, and we cross Tybee creek, paddling south. On a low tide trip, we paddle out to Myrtle, which is a hammock of little Tybee, and as we come around the shore of Little Tybee, it's kind of a curve, and there are areas of sand bars that are very, very shallow. Right now we are looking at a bone yard beach, and that is basically the skeletons of trees that were once here. In the wintertime we have Northeast winds that cause a lot of beach erosion. Once a maritime forest is washed over repeatedly, then it will turn into what we see here. It's the natural way for the island to move to the Southwest. And this place right here is very dynamic. You can see it looks very barren, but just a few years ago, there was a salt marsh right over there. As we move down the beach, we'll notice we can see the formation of the summer dunes. The south wind brings that sand that was carried off shore by the northeast wind in the winter, brings it back up and makes really nice gentle, round dunes with sea oats on top. This time of the year the oats are very golden. Their seedpods are full-blown, ready to be dispersed by the wind. The sea oats have roots that can be as long as forty feet and they're a sign of a very healthy dune because they're on top, they catch the sand that blows in the wind, and they cause the dunes to get bigger and bigger, which help protect the interior of the island.</p> <p>>>Narrator: The structure of a barrier island changes from these primary dunes to interdune meadows, which have more varied plant life. Shrubs like wax myrtles appear between these meadows and the live oaks of the upland areas of maritime forest.</p>

Little Tybee Island, rather than having one large landmass, is comprised of areas of forested land rising above the marshes, called hammocks. These hammocks are separated by tidal creeks. They are great places to view birds like egrets and osprey, which use the cabbage palm trees, the live oaks, and the wax myrtles for roosting and for nesting.

If you look closely, there is interesting plant life among the trees. Spanish moss is often mistaken as a parasitic plant. In reality it is merely a tenant, receiving its nourishment from airborne materials.

Resurrection fern can also be found in Little Tybee's hammocks. It gets its name from the way the curled leaves open and turn green after a rain. Like Spanish moss, this plant is called an "epiphyte" which means "air plant," and it favors live oaks for its residence.

Saw palmettos generally grow creeping along the ground with their large fan shaped leaves standing up from their reclining stems. In addition to their striking appearance, these plants are reported to have medicinal properties.

The prickly pear is usually associated with the deserts of the southwest, but this edible plant lives here too. The cactus pads can be used in salads, casseroles, soups, or grilled. Prickly Pear jelly can also be made from the fruit of some species. There are studies ongoing to find out if this plant has medicinal properties as well... But these plants are just some of the reasons Little Tybee is so special.

>>Henson: What I think makes Tybee, Little Tybee very special is because it is so close to Tybee Island, and it offers kayakers an easy way to get out into a wilderness experience without having to paddle for a long way. You can get a whole variety of habitats from the salt marsh to the maritime forest to the beach atmosphere, um, all kinds of wildlife, we usually see osprey and the egrets and we see wood storks. We could see bald eagles.

	<p>>>Narrator: So if the idea of viewing the wonderful plants and animals has you ready to grab the nearest paddle, there are some reasons to plan your trip carefully. Even though this trip is considered an easy one, kayaking on the Georgia coast is safer with a guide, at least until you get your sea legs. Atlantic tides can be confusing to a novice, and therefore dangerous. Dale Williams of Sea Kayak Georgia enjoys guiding year round.</p>
	<p>>>Williams: We start Sea Kayak Georgia about ten years ago running extended trips programs down the Georgia coast. And from there it just developed into day trips, and then we have a pretty strong instructional program now.</p>
	<p>>>Narrator: Part of the instruction is learning about the tides. As the moon passes in alignment with the sun, we see either a new moon or a full moon. This causes a spring tide where there is little water in the tidal creeks at low tide. When the moon is ninety degrees out from the sun, we see a half moon and there is a neap tide, which is a Norse word for “plenty”. So on a neap tide there is usually water available to get through the tidal creeks even on a low tide.</p>
	<p>>>Williams: Really the most unique thing about Little Tybee is that it has so many different islands and hammocks. Most of the other islands on the Georgia coast have a large landmass, and then behind that island they’ll have some tidal creeks. Whereas, Little Tybee really is just a series, a very large series of tidal creeks, about sixty islands and hammocks. So if you come during the neap tide so that the tides are in the middle of the day, then you can pass through all of the major river bodies inside the island and go and visit from one to the next. But everything is tidal, so you have to plan it and have to understand the tides and have to plan it around the tides.</p>
	<p>>>Narrator: Using a touring kayak is great fun and a peaceful way to explore Little Tybee as well as other barrier islands on our coast. Not too far from Little Tybee Island lies the Wassaw Island National Wildlife Refuge. If you are looking for an unspoiled barrier island, it doesn’t get any better than this. Unlike Georgia's other barrier islands, the forests here were never cleared for timber, cotton or cattle. The 10,070-acre migratory bird refuge consists of Wassaw Island, tidal salt marsh, Little Wassaw Island, Pine Island and several small hammocks, including Flora Hammock. Today, Wassaw is considered the most pristine island on the Georgia coast and is the best representation of what the barrier islands looked like</p>

	before Europeans arrived.
	<p>>>Range: Wassaw has the least disturbed maritime forest surely in Georgia and possibly on the east coast. And, there are some loblolly pines on this island and slash pines that reach very close to three and a half to four feet in diameter and over a hundred feet tall. So that sets this island apart from almost any other island on the Georgia coast.</p> <p>>>Narrator: The reason these islands are so pristine is a history of sparse use by people. Flora hammock was inhabited from the 1820's until 1870 by a man named Otting Sail, who farmed the island. Wassaw Island and Little Wassaw were owned by the Parson family, who decided to sell the islands to the Nature Conservancy to preserve them for the future. These islands were then sold to the Fish and Wildlife Service for one dollar.</p> <p>Hiking, shelling, bird-watching, nature study, and fishing are excellent activities here. Facilities are sparse, so come prepared with water, food, and sunscreen when you visit. Be sure to follow "leave no trace" ethics and remember to stay off dunes. Many birds lay their eggs right in the sand, so dogs and even our feet are threats to their safety.</p>
	<p>Another activity offered at certain times of year is hunting. Some might wonder why hunting is allowed at a Wildlife Refuge.</p> <p>>>Range: Basically because the deer on the island have no predators as they did prior to settlement, the deer tend over populate themselves. They tend to destroy the vegetation, and eventually they'll starve. Hunting and fishing on the refuge to manage those populations is a compatible use, so we encourage that.</p>
	<p>>>NARRATOR: WASSAW NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE HAS 25 MILE OF BEACHES, THOUSANDS OF ACRES OF SALT MARSH, AND ITS HAMMOCKS ARE UPLAND FOREST COMMUNITIES. WASSAW, LITTLE WASSAW AND PINE ISLANDS ARE precious reserves of</p>

	<p>wilderness. The lack of disturbance has allowed natural upland communities to flourish, which in turn support a natural diversity of animal species.</p>
	<p>>>Range:And because of the lack of disturbance, several bird species such as painted buntings reach the greatest densities here on Wassaw practically of any place on the east coast, if not the highest density.</p>
	<p>>>NARRATOR: More than 204 bird species have been identified here. These islands are home to egrets, herons, and other wading birds. Birders can appreciate the thousands of migrating songbirds that visit Wassaw in spring and fall. Roseate spoonbills have been spotted here and permanent residents include: bald eagles, osprey, American oystercatchers, and terns. But birds are not the only interesting animals here...</p>
	<p>>>Range: Wassaw has one of the longest standing turtle programs on the Georgia coast. They've been monitored and protected continuously since 1973 by the Caretta Research Project, which is administered by the Savannah Science Museum. So these programs are just invaluable in the data collection that's going on.</p>
	<p>>>Narrator: Moving down the coastline, we next come to Ossabaw Island.</p> <p>>>McCuean: Ossabaw Island is just a Georgia and a national treasure. The Tory family, out of the northeast, owned the island for many, many years. And Sandy West was a Tory, and she decided to do a bargain sale to the state of Georgia for Ossabaw Island. So the Nature Conservancy worked with Mrs. West on this deal, and then she sold it to the Nature Conservancy in the state of Georgia for half the value of the appraisal.</p> <p>>>Narrator: Once the site of a Spanish mission, St. Catherine's Island is home to the Wildlife Survival Center, which houses over 300 animals from around the world. St. Catherine's is one of two Georgia Islands owned and protected by a family foundation.</p> <p>>>McCuean: Moving along down the coast, you come to Blackbeard Island, which is owned by the Fish and Wildlife Service. The sand dune line of Blackbeard is so beautiful, and the Fish and Wildlife Service does a great job of maintaining that island. You can recreate; you can take a boat trip over to the island on your own accord primarily, and they do allow a lot of camping on Blackbeard Island that you make reservations for.</p>

	<p>>>Narrator: Most of Sapelo Island was once owned by R.J. Reynolds, and is now owned by the state of Georgia and individuals within the Hog Hammock Community. The public is allowed to take a ferry trip over to spend the day or the weekend. Cabretta Beach is a wonderful place to camp. There are bed and breakfasts available in the Hog Hammock Community and the Department of Natural Resources hosts hunts several times each year.</p> <p>The Sapelo Island Cultural Festival draws a crowd each year with food, music, crafts, and fellowship among both residents and guests of the island.</p> <p>>>McCuean: In the middle of the Altamaha Sound, you have these two wonderful barrier islands called Egg and Wolf Islands that are now part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. But Egg Island was actually purchased by Jane Yarn and her family. Jane Yarn was a citizen of Atlanta and actually founded the Nature Conservancy chapter here in Georgia. Egg Island is now known as the hot spot for birding on the eastern seaboard.</p>
	<p>>>NARRATOR: Reachable only by boat, the ideal place to savor the wild beauty of Georgia's coast is Little St. Simons Island--6 miles long and 3 miles wide. Little St. Simon's Island is privately owned, but in 1978 it was opened to the general public with limited accommodations. Little St. Simon's Island is a protected island and has its own natural resources manager.</p>
	<p>>>Harris: Little St. Simon's Island has ten thousand acres of pristine salt marsh and about 2500 acres of highland on the island including an unbelievable maritime climax maritime forest as well as seven miles of pristine beach. It actually has more beach area than St. Simon's Island does. St. Simon's Island only has about three miles of beach. The President of the American Bird Conservancy was here last year and said there's no question that Little St. Simon's Island is in the top one hundred important bird areas in the U.S. And if he were to have to guess, he would say it's probably in the top twenty of the important bird areas in the United States.</p> <p>>>Taylor: We've got an amazing array of birds here on the island. We've got everything from the roseate spoonbill to the painted bunting right now, which the male is actually a bright red, a bright blue, and a bright green all at once. You'll be able to see those just in their natural habitat just flying from</p>

limb to limb. We've got white ibis, just a lot of different birds here on the island.

>>Harris: The habitat is what makes it so unique and what makes it so special for both shorebirds and the tropical migrant birds coming through here during the spring and fall of the year. I think probably the most unique thing about Little St Simon's is its importance to birds. We have the largest population of American oystercatchers, 300 to 600 birds. We've got a nesting pair of bald eagles on the island and they've nested here three years in a row now. In the past we've had wood storks nest on Little St Simons. We've got a huge population of roosting wood storks.

>>Narrator: So if you are already convinced you want to go, how does one get to visit Little St. Simon's Island?

>>Taylor: Well we only allow thirty guests at any particular time mainly because of the space constraints. We have the original houses here and then we also have two larger new houses, lodge structures, which we've built to accommodate up to thirty guests. It kind of creates a nice, intimate feel. You don't feel so packed in as some of the other hotels do, and you get to know all the other guests as well. So it's kind of camp for adults, and that's the way we, we like to explain it.

Another way to enjoy Little St. Simon's is that we offer day trips to our guests, where you can come over on our 10:30. We give you a tour of the north end, which is a maritime forest. We bring you back to the lodge where you can enjoy lunch with the other guests and get to kind of tour the different accommodations. And then in the afternoon, we actually let you stroll on our seven-mile stretch of beach, which is totally uninhabited. And then at four o'clock, it's time to go back home.

>>Narrator: There are naturalists available to help guests make the most of their time here. It's no surprise that birding is one of the more popular activities.

Birds aren't the only animals to see on Little St. Simon's. Each year, Little St. Simons Island documents approximately 40 loggerhead sea turtle nests on its beaches.

>>Taylor: Our guests actually get to go out on turtle walks with Jodi, and

she shows our guests the individual turtle nests, and those nests actually get excavated

>>Narrator: A nest is excavated when it is determined that all the hatchlings have gone. This nest was moved above the high tide line to protect the eggs from water damage and this group gets a surprise to find two hatchlings just emerging. Without assistance, they would become food for sea gulls at low tide.

>>Thompson: It's hard for the hatchlings to know when it's high tide like when they're in the sand. Usually they do it at night.

>>Narrator: At night, the hatchlings use the guidance of the moon. They will quickly become disoriented by lights near the beach, and a hatchling in daylight is at a real disadvantage.

>>Taylor: And our guests actually get to count how many eggs hatched and get to examine the eggs to see why they didn't hatch.

>>Narrator: You might not be lucky enough to help a sea turtle make it to the ocean, but there are a few animals on this island with which we can guarantee some interaction.

>>Taylor: Brian takes our guests out on horseback rides. We get to use some of the trails that go through the interior of the island. It's a great advantage point to seeing the island. You get to go through the maritime forest, through the Spanish moss. It's just a great way for our guests to really get to see the island.

>>Narrator: While anyone can visit Little St Simons today, for many years, the island was the family getaway for the Barrelsheimers. They bought the island to use the red cedars for their pencil-making company. The cedars turned out to be too high in salt content to make good pencils, so they were spared. The family imported certain breeds of deer to the island for hunting, and one of these breeds can still be seen here today.

>>Taylor: Well, Philip Barrelsheimer actually brought European fallow deer to this island, and today we have a herd of about seven hundred and fifty. They come in different colors, everything from white to light brown, dark brown, and then my favorite are the spotted deer that even when they're full

	<p>grown and they have a huge rack, they still look like Bambi. And you'll see them everywhere, from the compound throughout the woods. Sometimes you'll even see them on the beach.</p> <p>Well, our guests come here and they're coming from traffic and from television and from television and that sort of thing. So they're kind of surprised when all you hear are birds, and there are no roads, there are no cars or whatnot. So it's just really quiet. They get to come here and they enjoy what nature has to offer, which includes seven miles of beach with nothing on it, no development. They can go fishing; they can go kayaking through the marsh.</p> <p>What's interesting is that Little St. Simon's is actually a place where you can come or a guest can come to enjoy wildlife in its pristine state, whereas other preserves limit access and most of which don't allow overnight guests to stay.</p>
	<p>>>NARRATOR: THERE ARE FIVE OTHER BARRIER ISLANDS, THREE OF WHICH ARE DEVELOPED: SEA ISLAND, ST. SIMON'S, AND JEKYLL. THE CROWN JEWEL OF OUR COAST MAY BE THE CUMBERLAND ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE, THE SOUTHERNMOST OF GEORGIA'S ISLANDS. Cumberland is under the care of the National Park Service.</p>
	<p>>>McCuean: The citizens of Georgia are so fortunate that our--the conservationists in the late sixties and early seventies passed The Coastal Marsh Protection Act, and because of that act, I think it allowed the effort to conserve the barrier islands because they are such a part of one another. They are an integral part of each another, and what goes into the marsh affects the barrier islands as well as the uplands of Georgia's coast. And because of the awareness that was raised through the protection of the marshes it then allowed everybody to think "now we have to do this barrier islands." And so we had wonderful people in companies that owned these barrier islands that really had the forethought to say "let's protect this natural resource and let's keep it in tact for future generations."</p>
	<p>>>NARRATOR: GEORGIANS ARE TRULY FORTUNATE TO HAVE THESE SPECTACULAR BARRIER ISLANDS TO ENJOY, TO PROTECT, AND TO SHARE.</p> <p>>>FEMALE NARRATOR: SEVEN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES</p>

	<p>ARE INCLUDED IN THE SAVANNAH COASTAL REFUGES COMPLEX, AND SIX OF THESE ARE IN GEORGIA. THE SAVANNAH NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, OR NWR, ALLOWS FISHING AND HUNTING AT CERTAIN TIMES OF THE YEAR AND BIRDING ALL YEAR LONG. WASSAW, HARRIS NECK AND BLACKBEARD ISLAND NWRs ARE ALSO WONDERFUL PLACES TO GO BIRDING AND HIKING. TYBEE ISLAND AND WOLF ISLAND NWRs DON'T ALLOW HUMAN VISITORS. THEY ARE TRULY FOR THE BIRDS. CHECK OUT THIS WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION.</p>
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