



Nota De Soto

SPRING 2025

De Soto National Memorial Is OPEN!

Visitor Center & Restrooms Remain Closed, Limited Trail Accessibility

After the devastating damage suffered by De Soto National Memorial following Hurricanes Debby, Helene, and Milton in 2024, our beloved park is open and welcoming visitors from near and far! Neighbors and dogs have returned to walk the trails. Out-of-state and out-of-country visitors come to discover the stories of the De Soto expedition. History lovers and nature lovers are thrilled to be able to enjoy this special place that many call an undiscovered jewel.

Waist high water washed over the berm covering the area surrounding the Visitor Center and filled Camp Uzita. Crashing waves of water seriously damaged the integrity of the palisade walls, making them unstable and dangerous. Historic replica structures sustained significant wind and water damage. Six inches of standing water entered the Visitor Center.

Damage to the Visitor Center is extensive, requiring its closure and total refurbishment before it is safe to enter again. As a historic building, it cannot be torn down and replaced. Careful removal of mold, asbestos tile, and water damaged walls and woodwork require special handling. Services, such as water, sewer, and electricity, must be restored in order to begin the work. Funds have been earmarked. Work has begun. This will be a long process.

Our rangers have risen to the challenge of meeting park visitors and providing park

brochures, trail maps, and the beloved Passport Cancellation Station while stationed in a tent. They are excited to welcome the public back after a 5-month closure due to serious safety issues. Be sure to stop by with questions or just to say hi. They are happy to say, "WELCOME BACK!"



Pictured Above: Friends of De Soto National Memorial table (left) sharing a tent with De Soto National Memorial's temporary "Visitor Center" station (right) at the park.

Who Are We?

Friends of De Soto National Memorial, Inc. was founded in 2008 with the purpose of supporting the National Park Service's De Soto National Memorial. We are a private non-profit corporation organized under the laws of the State of Florida.

Our purpose & mission statement:

"To initiate, promote, and support the educational, historical, interpretive, and scientific activities of the De Soto National Memorial."

Board of Directors:

Margo Belaga, Mary Hawk, Ann Marie Shields, Matt Woodside, Kel Roth

P.O. Box 14422, Bradenton, FL 34280-4422

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A Florida Non-Profit Corporation



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FRIENDS OF DE SOTO
NATIONAL MEMORIAL, INC.

Teaching History with a BOOM!

De Soto National Memorial has a cannon! Purchased in 2023 using funds donated to the park, this bronze field cannon was forged in Palatka, Florida at the Campbell Cannon Works.

Modeling a cannon thought to be included on the De Soto expedition, it allows park rangers to tell the stories of early Florida. It will be featured in historical weapons demonstrations throughout the year.



***Pictured Above:** Cannon at De Soto National Memorial.*



***Pictured Above:** Ranger Dan posing in period clothing with De Soto's cannon.*

Help the Friends Help the Park!



The Friends of De Soto National Memorial has been able to provide over \$2,000 to the park so far for trail renourishment and hurricane remediation.

Help us keep up the momentum!

Donate at www.FriendsofDeSotoMemorial.org or by scanning the QR code above.

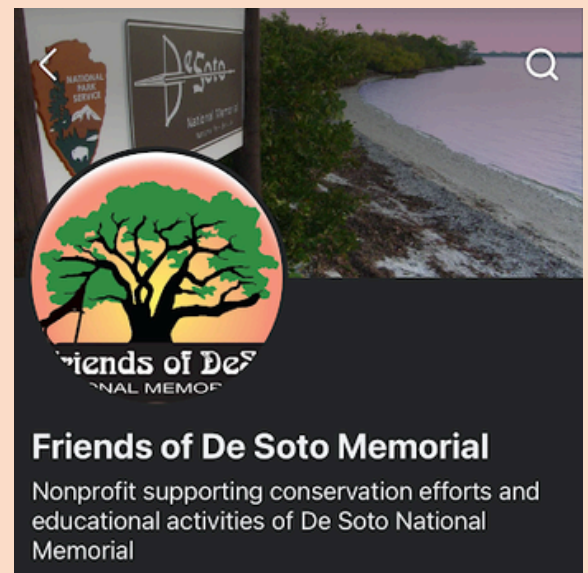


***Pictured Above:** De Soto National Memorial Superintendent, Joseph Brehm, (left) receives a check from Friends of De Soto National Memorial Board President, Margo Belaga (right).*

Keep Up to Date

The Friends Are on Facebook!

***Below:** Friends of De Soto's Facebook profile.*



Follow our page for up-to-date information on park happenings, ranger outreach appearances, and updates on the park's rehabilitation progress.

Find us on Facebook as
"Friends of De Soto Memorial" or visit
www.Facebook.com/FriendsofDeSotoMemorial



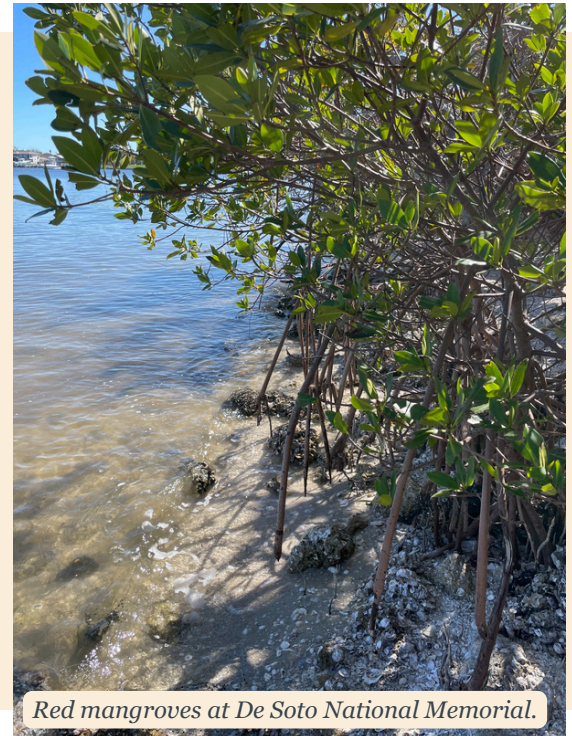
Mangroves to the Rescue!

Mangrove trees line De Soto National Memorial, providing storm protection and so much more. These remarkable trees are protected by Florida law and are true hurricane heroes.

The **red mangrove**, *Rhizophora mangle*, stands closest to and in the water. Their long prop roots make it look like they are walking on their toes.

Red mangroves' prop roots play an important role in shoreline stabilization. Reducing erosion and mitigating wave energy, the red mangroves at De Soto helped the park weather the onslaught of the intruding water, benefitting our trails and the surrounding ecosystem.

Those same prop roots act as aquatic nurseries for the babies of the park—fish, crabs, shrimp, and so many more. The juveniles shelter in the root system until they grow large enough to strike out on their own. The fallen leaves of the red mangrove also provide the food they eat.



Red mangroves at De Soto National Memorial.



Black mangroves at De Soto National Memorial.

Cousin to the red mangrove are the **black mangroves**. Growing closer to the dry land, the black mangrove, *Avicennia germinans*, also plays a role in shoreline stabilization and wave energy mitigation.

These trees are the ones along the paths that look like they have snorkels sticking up around their base. Those “snorkels” are pneumatophores that play a role similar to actual snorkels, providing oxygen to the roots of the tree that are periodically submerged.

Our park mangroves are part of our “living shoreline.” They are natural storm fighters. While they cannot erase the damage caused by catastrophic hurricane winds and tidal surge, they do protect the park and its inhabitants.

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Meet the Superintendent: Joseph Brehm

During this time of significant change, De Soto National Memorial is lucky to call Joseph Brehm our park superintendent.

Joe is a 30-year veteran of the National Park Service, starting out at Castillo de San Marcos in Saint Augustine, spending time at Minute Man Missile National Historic Site in South Dakota, and returning to Florida to join our De Soto team in February of 2023.

His career has included leadership roles in park law enforcement, historical interpretation, and NPS Ranger education. His love of historical weapons led to his role as a NPS historic weapons supervisor and trainer.

Graduating from the University of Florida, Joe knows the joys and challenges of living in Florida.

Joe and his dog, Rocket, are happy to be back at the place they love. Joe sees his time with us at De Soto as a chance to bring his skills, knowledge, and experience to its best use. We agree, Joe!



Pictured Right:
*Joseph Brehm, De
Soto National
Memorial
Superintendent,
smiling in uniform.*
Photo Credit: NPS

Become a member!

Yes, I would like to support my National Park by becoming a member of the Friends of De Soto National Memorial, Inc.

Memberships are tax deductible. (Check one.)

☐ Individual.....\$25.00
☐ Family.....\$40.00
☐ Business.....\$75.00
☐ Senior (65+).....\$20.00
☐ Sponsor.....\$100.00+ \$_____

My check for \$_____, (membership renewal plus an additional donation if desired) made out to "Friends of De Soto NM" is enclosed. Please send membership materials to the name and address below:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

I would like to help! (Check all that apply.)

☐ Membership Committee
☐ Publicity Committee
☐ Fundraising/Special Event Committee

How did you hear about us?

Detach and mail to:

Friends of De Soto National Memorial
P.O. Box 14422, Bradenton, FL, 34280-4422

Or join online at:

www.friendsofdesotomemorial.org

Thank you!

The Friends of De Soto National Memorial, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization.



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