

Our Island: Haven in the ice pack

Qikiqtaruk has always been a gathering place. Inuvialuit have used the site for thousands of years and remnants of old dwellings are still visible. In the late 1800s, American whalers established a station at Ilutaq (Pauline Cove) where ships were protected from storms and sea ice. Since then, the Anglican Church, Hudson's Bay Co., other fur

traders, reindeer herders, the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals and the RCMP were all present on Herschel Island at some point in the past 100+ years.

Today, Inuvialuit families continue to use the area for traditional activities while researchers from around the world study the unique and rapidly changing Arctic environment. Park rangers manage the park, welcome visitors and share stories.



Wildlife viewing



Between land and sea, the island's dry polar climate supports a surprising web of life, thanks to ocean currents. The huge driftwood trunks that litter the beaches in this treeless land originate from as far away as the Liard Basin. They were delivered by the nutrient-rich outflow of the Mackenzie River. Billions of tiny organisms feed a diversity of fishes that, in turn, attract a myriad of air, sea and land animals, including one of the largest colonies of Inagiq (Black Guillemots) in the Western Arctic. Listen to their gentle whistles near the old Anglican Mission House.

Despite near extinction by early commercial whalers, Arviq (Bowhead Whale) migrate past the island in the fall, gorging on the abundance of tiny plankton. The white Qilalugaq (Beluga Whale) is commonly seen from the island. If you are lucky, Ugyuk (Bearded Seal) may pop its head out of the

shallow bays. But the most common marine mammal is the Natchiq (Ringed Seal) who fish Uugavik (Arctic Cod), Iqalukpik (Arctic Char), Qaaktaq (Pacific Herring) and Nataarnaq (Arctic Flounder) along summer sea ice edges. Kidjgaviaraq (Peregrine Falcon), Qilriq (Rough-legged Hawk) and Ukpik (Snowy Owl) hunt a variety of songbirds and small mammals.

When the ocean freezes in winter, land mammals can walk to the island. They also swim across in summer. Aktaq (Grizzly Bear), Umingmak (muskox), and Tuktu (Barren-ground Caribou) are all commonly seen. Red and Arctic foxes hunt Collared and Brown lemmings and Tundra Vole, who nibble grasses, sedges and flowers. In winter, Nanuq (polar bear) den on Qikiqtaruk's northern slopes.

When viewing and photographing wildlife, **keep your distance**. Use binoculars, scopes and telephoto lenses to get a better look.

Publications

- **Taimani: Inuvialuit History Timeline** - irc.inuvialuit.com
- **Herschel Island Qikiqtaryuk: a natural and cultural history of Yukon's Arctic island** - Christopher R. Burn
- **Qikiqtaruk: Inuvialuit Archaeology on Herschel Island** - YG
- **Herschel Island: Qikiqtaryuk – A Guide to Historic Resources** - YG
- **Waves Upon the Shore: An historical Profile of Herschel Island** - Rob Ingram & Helen Dobrowolsky
- **Inuvialuit Nautchiangit: relationships between people and plants** - Inuvialuit elders with Robert W. Bandiga



Isla Meyers-Smith

- **Cultural Resource [pocket] Guide** - Parks Canada

Available at Department of Environment offices, Visitor Information Centres or from Yukon.ca:

- **Checklist of the Birds of Herschel Island**
- **Flora of Herschel Island Territorial Park**
- **Into the Yukon Wilderness**
- **Yukon Wildlife Viewing Guide**
- **How you can stay safe in bear country**

Maps

1:50,000 scale map

- **Herschel Island** (sheet 117D12E)

1:250,000 scale map

- **Herschel Island** (sheet 117D)

Contacts

- **Yukon Parks**
Whitehorse
867-667-5648, or toll free in Yukon 1-800-661-0408, ext. 5648
yukon.parks@yukon.ca

Dawson City
867-993-7714

Inuvik
867-777-4058
- **Historic Sites Unit**
867-667-5386, or toll-free in Yukon 1-800-661-0408, ext. 5386
- **Emergency**
RCMP Inuvik
867-777-1111

Yukon.ca

A GUIDE TO

Herschel Island Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park

Qikiqtaryuk “it is island”



Yukon

Welcome to our island in the polar sea

Herschel Island - Qikiqtaruk became Yukon's first territorial park in 1987. A result of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, the 116 km² park protects a rare combination of natural and human heritage.

This is a living park. You are entering the home of the Inuvialuit, the original people of the western arctic coast.

Keep it wild

Plan ahead. Prepare to leave no trace.

Travel and camp on durable surfaces. Avoid crushing fragile artefacts, delicate tundra plants and hidden bird nests. Use existing trails and recommended routes. Avoid the sensitive Inuvialuit grave areas. In the uplands, spread out on durable ground. Camp in the driftwood shelters.

Dispose of waste properly. Pack it in, pack it out. Use the outhouse. In the backcountry, cover human waste in a small hole 60 m from water, camp and trails.



Leave what you find. Leave natural, historical and cultural artifacts undisturbed. Please report finds to park staff.

Minimize campfire impacts. Use stoves or existing fire rings. Keep campfires small.

Respect wildlife. Observe from a distance. Never feed them. Keep pets under control.

Be considerate of others. Respect the interests of other island users, namely tourists, researchers, hunters and residents.

Facilities

Camping



Bring all the equipment necessary for independent camping in an arctic environment. Facilities are limited to driftwood windbreak shelters for tenting, fire rings, outhouses, and a limited supply of water and driftwood. Camping permits (\$20 per night or \$18 with prepaid permit) and fishing licences are available from the park rangers.

Kuvluřaq (Simpson Point)



Visit the interpretive displays in the Community House. Built in 1893 by the Pacific Steam Whaling Company, it was used as a gathering place, RCMP headquarters and the residence of the Stringer family. From here you can wander the buildings and layers of history of Kuvluřaq, imagining the bustle of the whaling period and the 1000s of years of Inuvialuit settlement. When time permits, park rangers offer tours.



Hiking



Wander the beaches at Kuvluřaq or trek upland tundra in the footsteps of Arctic explorers and Inuvialuit hunters. Follow recommended routes and stay clear of the Inuvialuit burial sites. Kuvluřaq in particular is covered in delicate and unseen natural, historic, paleontological and archaeological remains. Stay away from unstable cliff edges. They continually and suddenly collapse into the sea. Tundra cracks also give way to dangerous caverns of melting permafrost muck.

If you plan to hike in the park, let the rangers know where you are going and when you expect to return. **Always carry bear deterrents.**

Boating



Boat charters may operate out of various Mackenzie Delta communities. If you are self-supported, bring adequate fuel for the return trip, as gas is not available at Qikiqtaruk. Smaller boats and yachts may anchor in Illutaq (Pauline Cove), where whaling ships took shelter from the crushing ice long ago. Cruise ships anchor offshore and boat in by zodiac.

If you are rafting or kayaking the Firth River on the Yukon mainland, you can end your trip at Qikiqtaruk and return by pre-arranged flight. Boating around the island for a day trip is only recommended under extremely calm conditions as the exposed northern cliffs offer no safe or sheltered places to disembark. Be aware that weather can change very quickly.



#50-762, Courtesy Mystic Seaport Museum Inc.

Wildlife and you

Bears aren't the only wildlife attracted to human smells. On Qikiqtaruk, Red and Arctic foxes and nauyat (gulls) are notorious thieves. Help them stay wild and healthy by keeping your food and garbage secure.

You may encounter Akiaq or Nanuq anywhere on the island, at any time of year.

Learn about bears and how to prevent negative encounters.

Food and garbage are the number one attractants. Never leave food, dishes, garbage, cosmetics or any smelly item where a bear could get it, especially in your tent. Cook and store attractants and waste in bear-proof containers 100 m away from your camp.

Ask the park rangers about recent bear activity and rules. Pick up a copy of *How you can stay safe in bear country*. Ask to view the *Staying Safe in Bear Country* video.

Getting There



From mid-June to mid-September, you can charter aircraft out of Inuvik, NWT (250 km southeast). The island is often shrouded in fog, particularly in late summer, and flights can be delayed for hours or even days. Be prepared with sufficient gear and food. For self-supported trips to Qikiqtaruk, leave a trip plan with a friend or the RCMP.

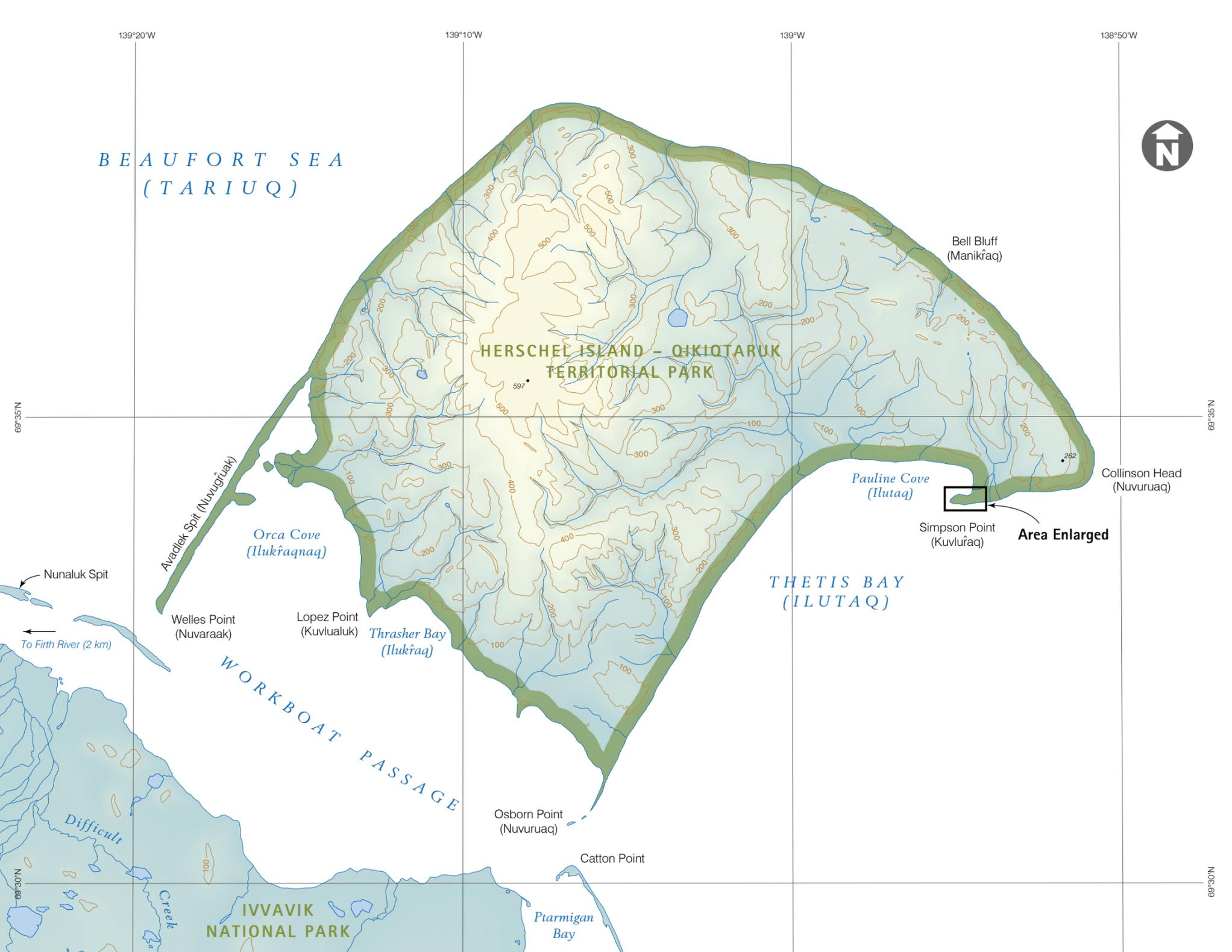
A Park Permit is required to land an aircraft or commercial boat on the island.

Hunting, trapping and fishing in the park



You may encounter Inuvialuk subsistence users within the park. When you see our friends or families harvesting Tuktu (caribou), Natchiq (seal) or Iqalukpik (Arctic Char), you are witnessing an ancient and enduring way of arctic life.

If you are an Inuvialuk hunter, please respect other park users. Store meat and dispose of carcasses away from visitor areas. In summer, there are no-hunting zones in the historical and settlement areas.



Simpson Point (Kuvluuraq)

Historic Structures

1. Northern Whaling and Trading Company Store (1926)
2. N.W. & T. Co. Shed (1926)
3. N.W. & T. Co. Warehouse / Canada Customs Bonded Warehouse (1926)
4. Pacific Steam Whaling Company Community House (1893) / Police Detachment Headquarters and Barracks
5. P.S.W.Co. Bonehouse (c. 1894)
6. Triton boat sank (1895)
7. RCMP Dog Kennels
8. Royal Canadian Corps of Signals Transmitter Station (1930)
9. P.S.W.Co. Blubberhouse (c. 1890s)
10. Ikgin House/Captain McKenna's Cabin, (c. 1893)
11. Meyook House (c. 1890's)
12. Kayotuk House (c. 1890's)
13. Anglican Mission House (1916)
14. Ice houses*
15. Whalers graves*
16. Inuvialuit graves*
17. RNWMP graves*
18. Kowana/Mackenzie private residence

* Restricted access

Park Facilities

4. Welcome Centre
19. Ahyakak/Travellers' cabin
20. Wash House
21. Storage shed
22. Park monument
23. Interpretive sign
24. Ranger quarters

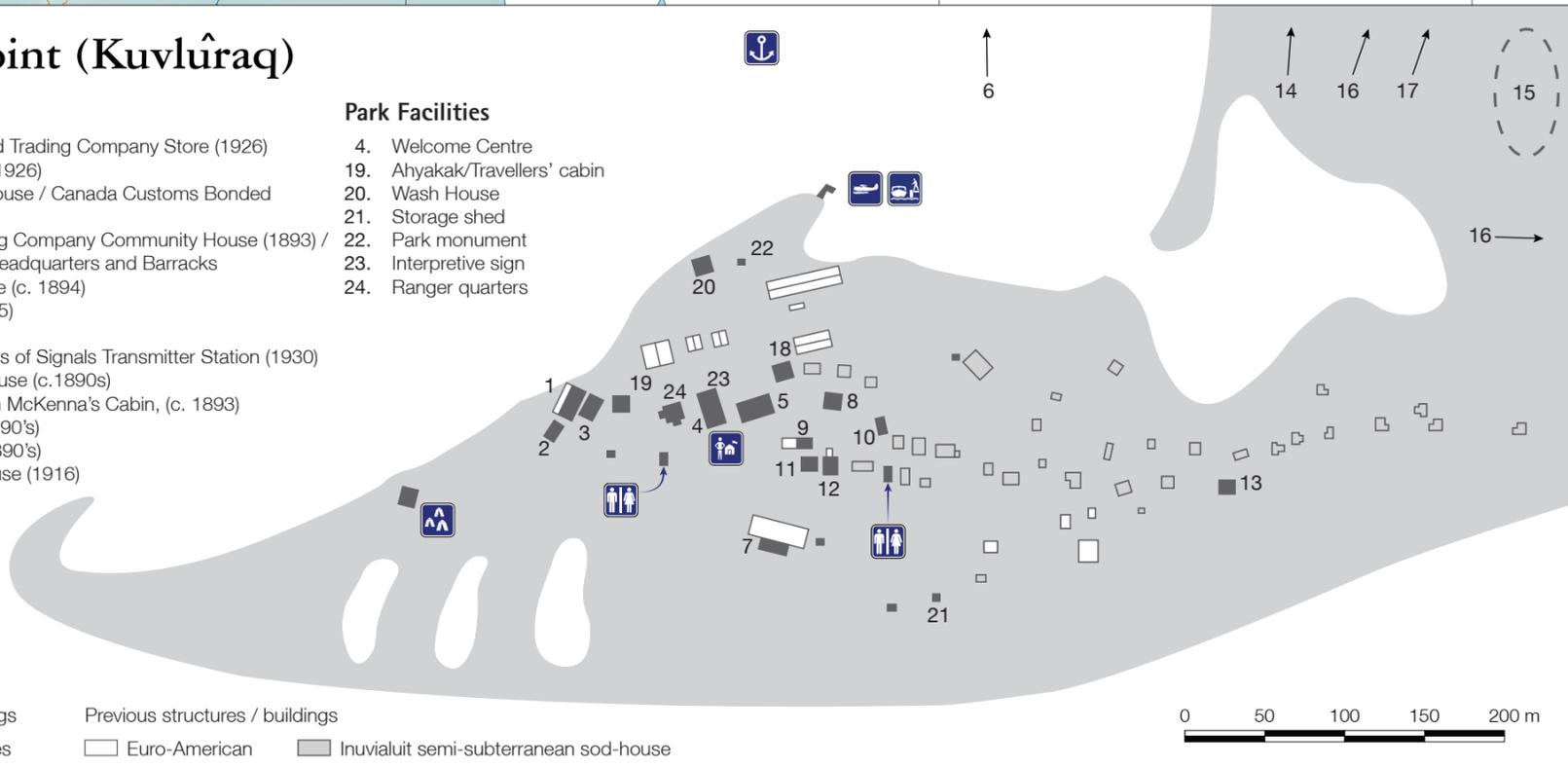
Existing structures / buildings

Historic / Park Facilities

Previous structures / buildings

Euro-American

Inuvialuit semi-subterranean sod-house



Herschel Island – Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park

YUKON



Map ID: ENV012.12.2023

