



[PORT ARTHUR]

Serene Retreat at Sea Rim

To reach the newest accommodation at **Sea Rim State Park** in Sabine Pass, not far from Houston, you have to journey 2 miles by boat out to the Gulf of Mexico to a secluded floating raft. Once there, if the park is open for overnight use, you can pitch your tent for the night, rocking gently on the water with waterfowl and fish as your only company—and maybe a few alligators, too. (Don't worry: Architecture students from the University of Texas at Austin designed the raft to be gator-proof.) Twelve years after Hurricane Ike swallowed the entire park with a 20-foot storm surge, the 4,621-acre coastal park beloved for its rustic beach area is emerging with new birding platforms and a new boardwalk, along with several great beach spots to set up camp (visitors can even drive out on the beach and camp there). Park Superintendent Nathan Londenberg says the majority of the park's acreage is in the wetlands, accessible mostly by boat. "I'm always trying to think of more ways to get people out there in that marsh environment," he says. Bird lovers will enjoy seeing American coots, cormorants, spoonbills, cranes, and egrets, he says. "That's a major part of the park that is not being experienced yet." At press time, the park was open for day use and limited camping. Check the website for updates. *Floating campsite*, \$15; canoe or kayak rental to get there is extra. Drive-up campsites, \$10–\$20. Park admission: adults, \$3; children 12 and under, free. 19335 S. Gulfway Drive, Sabine Pass. (512) 389-8900; tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/sea-rim. —*Cynthia J. Drake*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY TPWD (2); LARRY DITTO