

CAPE MAY POINT State Park



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|---------------------|---------|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|------------|---------------|------------------|
| Open Field or Grass | Wetland | Cattail Trail (0.2 mi) | Monarch Trail (1.2 mi) | Paved Path | Concession | Nature Center | Picnic Shelter |
| Forest | Water | Duck Pond Trail (0.5 mi) | Plover Trail (1.5 mi) | Trail Connector | Fishing | Park Office | Restrooms |
| Developed Area | | Hibiscus Trail (0.1 mi) | Raptor Trail (0.2 mi) | | Lighthouse | Parking Lot | Wildlife Viewing |

INTRODUCTION

Cape May Point State Park is located on the historic Cape May Peninsula at the southern tip of New Jersey, about two miles west of the city of Cape May. The 235-acre park is an ever-changing shoreline region of dunes, coastal (freshwater) marsh and ponds, wooded islands and varied uplands. It is perhaps best known as a tranquil area where visitors can find rest and enjoy the beauty of nature.

HISTORY

The first permanent settlers at the Cape were whalers who arrived from New England and Long Island in the mid-1600s. Early maps dated 1744 show a “flashlight” at Cape May Point; however, the first known lighthouse was built in 1823. Unfortunately, this lighthouse was undermined by the sea. In 1847, work began on a second lighthouse, but it was never completed. Under the supervision of the Army Corps of engineers, the second lighthouse was dismantled, and the bricks were used to build the present lighthouse, much further from the ocean. The current lighthouse was built in 1859.

Cape May Point State Park was once a military base. Battery 223 was built as part of the Harbor Defense Project of 1942. This gun emplacement was once 900 feet inland surrounded by earth and covered by sod, making it look as if it were a hill when viewed from the sea or air. Periods of severe coastal erosion and storms have washed away much of the sand resulting in the gun emplacement now sitting on the beach close to the water. Battery 223 was converted to a Sound Surveillance System station during the early days of the Cold War (1955-1962) but storm damage forced the surveillance station to be relocated to Fort Miles in Delaware. The gun mounts of the battery were once visible at low tide. In 2000, a massive beach replenishment project, by the Army Corps of Engineers, buried the concrete turrets. Visitors can approach the structure on foot, but they proceed with caution as it has deteriorated. Climbing onto the structure is prohibited.

The federal government transferred the land to the State of New Jersey in 1964 and a decade later the park was established. Additional land has been acquired over the years through the Green Acres and Garden State Preservation Trust land programs. In 1976, one of the former military buildings was renovated to house the park office and visitors center. A second building was refurbished and opened in 1983 as a nature center. A ramp to allow access over the dunes to the beachfront was constructed by the U.S. Army Corps in 2005 during a major beach replenishment project.

FEATURES AND ACTIVITIES



Lighthouse

The 157-foot-tall lighthouse is still an active aid to navigation. Its light flashes every 15 seconds and is visible 24 miles out to sea. The Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts of Cape May, under a lease agreement with the state, maintains and interprets the structure. For a fee, visitors can climb the 199 steps up the original, cast iron spiral stairway to the top of



the lighthouse for panoramic views of the Cape May peninsula. The oil shed adjacent to the lighthouse has been converted into a small welcome center and gift shop. For more information, contact the Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts at 609-884-5404, or visit capemaymac.org/experience/cape-may-lighthouse/.



Natural Area and Nature Center

Most of the park (153 acres) has been designated as the Cape May Point Natural Area. It contains a variety of habitat types and a wide range of different plants and animals. Among the most common inhabitants are ducks, herons, gulls, rabbits, raccoons, red fox and non-venomous snakes. The Natural Area is a critical resting and feeding area for thousands of migrating birds and monarch butterflies. Cape May Point is considered one of the premier spots in North America to view the fall migration. A special viewing platform is available on the edge of the Natural Area to view this annual phenomenon as well as winter waterfowl.

The Nature Center houses exhibits displaying the natural and cultural heritage of the Cape May region. Included is an exhibit on the “Cape May Diamonds,” the smooth, clear quartz crystals found on nearby beaches. There are also exhibits about bird migration, shoreline erosion, Native Americans and the marine environment.

A multi-purpose room is used for interpretive programs, meetings, workshops and special events. This room is available to environmental educators and others by special advance arrangement through the park office.



Hiking/Walking

There are three miles of trails in the park. The trailhead is located at the northeast corner of the parking lot. The trails course through wetlands, forests and ocean beach habitats. Walking is easy; however, there is soft sand on the beach. Trail maps are available at the park office. Only pedestrian traffic is permitted on the trails. The trails

in the Natural Area offer visitors excellent nature study and walking opportunities. A one-half mile, self-guided nature trail and wildlife viewing deck accommodate visitors with mobility challenges. **Pets are not permitted on the trails.**



Fishing

Surf fishing on the beach is permitted during daylight hours throughout the year and subject to NJDEP Fish & Wildlife regulations dep.nj.gov/njfw/. The following species have been caught: weakfish, bluefish, flounder, tautog and striped bass. **Freshwater fishing is not permitted.**



Picnicking

Picnic tables and charcoal grills are available at three pavilions within the park. One facility may be reserved for a fee by contacting the park office, while the others are available first-come, first-served. Picnicking is permitted on the beach; fires are not permitted.



Access For People With Disabilities

Cape May Point State Park facilities are partially accessible to persons with disabilities. Please contact the park office for further information regarding disability access needs. Text telephone (TTY) users, call the NJ Relay & CapTel Service at 711 or 1-800-852-7897 for English or 1-866-658-7714 for Spanish.



Pets

Pets are not permitted on the trails or behind the dunes. Pets are not permitted on the beach from April 15 through September 15 to help protect endangered bird species during nesting season. Pets must always be on a leash no longer than six feet in length and under the control of the owner at all times. Please clean up after your pets and take the waste with you. Please consult the park office for more information.



Keep It Clean and Green

Bring a bag or two and carry your trash out with you. Trash cans are not provided. Don't forget to recycle!

NOT PERMITTED

ATVs, alcoholic beverages, smoking, vaping* swimming, boat launching and drones are NOT permitted in this park.



*Smoking and vaping permitted only inside your personal vehicle.

To report an emergency or suspicious activity, call 1-877-WARN-DEP (1-877-927-6337) or 911.



CAPE MAY POINT STATE PARK
PO Box 107
Cape May Point, NJ 08212
609-884-2159

Directions: Located off the southern end of the Garden State Parkway (Exit 0), cross Cape May Bridge onto Lafayette Street, at the end of Lafayette make a right and follow signs for the park. Continue straight through 2 traffic lights and make a left onto Lighthouse Avenue.



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