

## 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, a second lighthouse was built one-third of a mile from the present site. Because of continuing erosion and poor design, this second lighthouse was never placed into service. 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. At low tide the gun turrets at the front are visible. Battery 223 was later converted to a Sound Surveillance System station during the early days of the Cold War (1955-1962) but storm damage forced it to be relocated to Fort Miles in Delaware. Visitors can approach the structure on foot if 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 is visible 24 miles out to sea and flashes every 15 seconds. 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 <https://capemaymac.org/experience/cape-may-lighthouse/>.

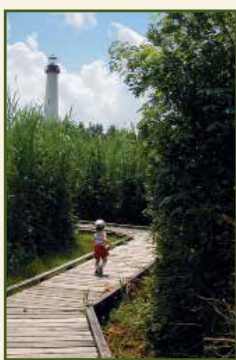


### Natural Area and Nature Center

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. Also, on display are 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.



### Fishing

Surf fishing is popular at Cape May Point State Park and is permitted during daylight hours throughout the year. The following species have been caught: weakfish, bluefish, flounder, tautog and striped bass. Fresh water fishing is prohibited.

Fishing on the beach is subject to New Jersey DEP Fish and Wildlife laws. Fresh water fishing is prohibited.



### Picnicking

Picnic tables and charcoal grills are available at three pavilions within the park. One facility may be reserved for a nominal fee by contacting the park office, while the others are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Picnicking is permitted on the beach; fires are prohibited.



### 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 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. 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. 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 and vaping\*, swimming, boat launching or 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.



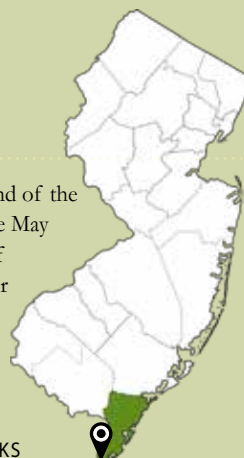
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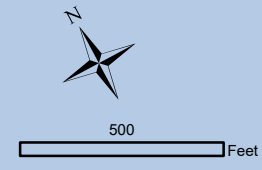


State of New Jersey  
Department of Environmental Protection  
State Park Service





# CAPE MAY POINT State Park



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