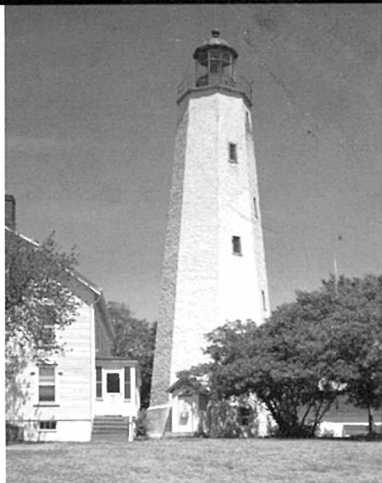


Sandy Hook

Gateway National Recreation Area
National Park Service
Department of the Interior

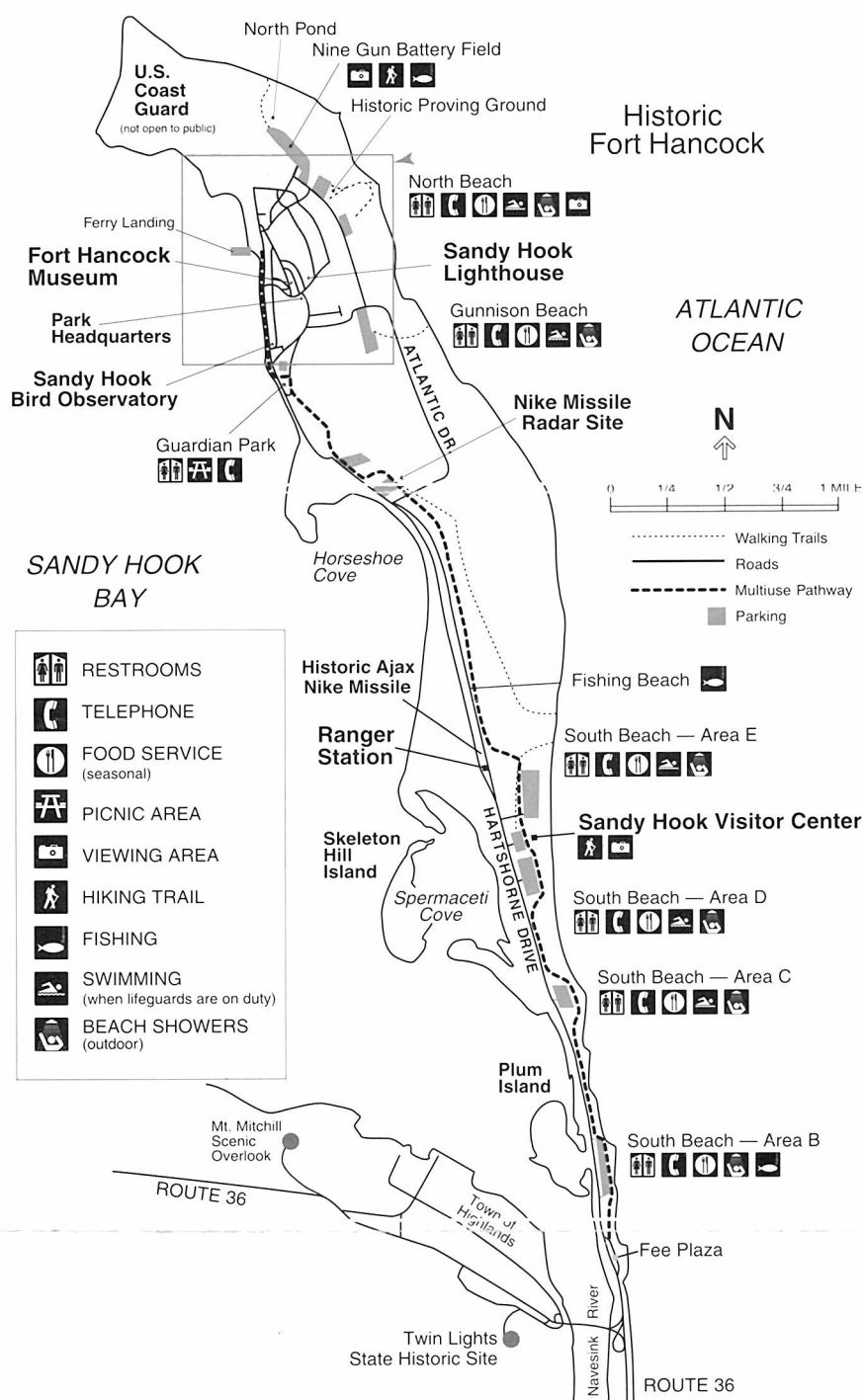


Sandy Hook is a 1,665 acre barrier beach peninsula at the northern tip of the New Jersey shore. The park includes seven miles of ocean beaches, salt marshes, hiking trails, and a maritime forest. Historic sites include the Sandy Hook Lighthouse, the oldest surviving lighthouse in the United States. There have been forts on Sandy Hook since the 1800's to guard the

entrance to New York Harbor. Historic Fort Hancock defended the harbor from 1895 until 1974. The Hook was also the site of the first US Army Proving Ground. Opportunities exist year round for birding, hiking, wind surfing, fishing and exploring the park's natural and cultural resources. Sandy Hook is open every day from sunrise to sunset.

Planning Your Visit

- **Sandy Hook Visitor Center**
Daily, 10 AM to 5 PM. Exhibits and a bookstore at the former Spermaceti Cove U.S. Life-Saving Station.
- **Fort Hancock**
The Fort Hancock Museum is open 1 PM to 5 PM on weekends and daily in summer. History House, a restored home on "Officers' Row" is open weekend afternoons year round and Battery Potter is open weekend afternoons spring through fall.
- **Sandy Hook Lighthouse**
Tours on weekend afternoons spring through fall. Grounds and video available daily.
- **Sandy Hook Bird Observatory**
This NJ Audubon center features exhibits and a bookstore. Tuesday to Saturday, 10 AM to 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM to 3 PM. Closed Mondays.
- **North Beach Observation Deck**
A great place to view the harbor and have a picnic. Grills not permitted.
- **Hiking**
Trails begin at the Sandy Hook Visitor Center and at the north end of Nine Gun Battery Field. Walking ocean beaches is permitted except in shorebird nesting areas that are closed during spring and summer.
- **Birding**
Try Plum Island, the Spermaceti Cove boardwalk across from the Visitor Center, the Horseshoe Cove salt marsh, North Pond or the fields at Fort Hancock.
- **Windsurfing**
On Sandy Hook Bay across from South Beach Area C. Be careful crossing the road.
- **Picnics**
Blanket picnics are allowed on the beach. Grills are permitted only at the Guardian Park picnic area.



Visiting In Summer

- **Swimming**
Swim only at guarded beaches. Lifeguards are on duty from 10 AM to 6 PM daily in summer at five ocean side beaches.
- **Weekend Traffic**
Summer weekends can be busy, especially in good weather. When parking areas are full, the park closes until parking becomes available. To avoid delays, arrive before 10 AM or after 2 PM. Traffic is not a problem on weekdays.
- **Parking Fees**
A daily beach parking fee is charged until 4 PM during the lifeguard season. A Sandy Hook seasonal beach pass is also available. National Park Service Golden Age (for age 62 and over) and Golden Access (for the permanently disabled) Passports give a 50% discount on beach parking fees. Golden passes are available at the Visitor Center. Parking is free in Fort Hancock.
- **Ferry service** from Manhattan to Fort Hancock is available on weekends in summer.
- **Beach wheelchairs** are available. Contact the Visitor Center.



Nature and History



The natural forces of the wind and waves are constantly changing the shoreline of Sandy Hook. This movement of sand helps to maintain a variety of coastal habitats. Sand dunes, grasslands, salt and freshwater marshes, shrub thickets, and maritime forests are unique, valuable natural resources and remain unchanged in contrast to the development found along much of the mid-Atlantic coast. The 264 acres of maritime forest contains the greatest concentration of American Holly on the East Coast. Some trees are over 170 years old. The salt marsh provides a vital function, serving as a nursery for marine species and the basis of the food chain in the estuarine environment. A number of threatened and

endangered species including piping plover and wild wormwood can be found in the park. Other interesting natural features include plentiful beach plums, prickly pear cactus and horseshoe crabs. Birders appreciate Sandy Hook's critical location in the Atlantic Flyway that enhances birding opportunities especially during spring and fall migrations. Past military activities and development have left their mark in many places on Sandy Hook. Park staff are working to restore degraded areas by re-vegetating with native plants and restoring, where appropriate, native animal populations like the northeastern beach tiger beetle, the Fowler's toad and eastern hognose snake.



Sandy Hook has played a role in defending and guiding ships through New York Harbor for more than two centuries. Since 1764, the Sandy Hook Lighthouse has been a beacon for shipping. During the American Revolution it was defended by British Loyalists, ensuring British access to New York City. The Sandy Hook Visitor Center is a former U.S. Life-Saving Station, whose crew rescued victims of shipwrecks in the late 19th century. The

U.S. Army first fortified Sandy Hook during the War of 1812 and later tested weapons at the Sandy Hook Proving Ground. A century ago, Fort Hancock and its gun batteries were built to defend the harbor and protect New York City from attack by sea. The fort continued in this role by later adding anti-aircraft defenses and, in the 1950s, Nike Air Defense Missiles. Today, many of the Fort's buildings are used by educational and environmental groups.

For a Safe and Enjoyable Visit

- Sandy Hook is a Carry-In/Carry Out park. Please take your trash home with you.
- Swim only at guarded beaches and follow lifeguard instructions. Swimming and alcohol don't mix.
- Pets must be leashed at all times and are banned from ocean beaches from March 15 to Labor Day for the protection of nesting shorebirds.
- Report safety concerns or criminal activities to the Ranger Station 732-872-5900, or to any Park Ranger.
- Open fires are prohibited.
- Metal detectors are prohibited. Do not handle suspected military ordnance and if found, report it to a Park Ranger.
- Do not enter closed areas. Stay off gun batteries and sea walls.
- Glass containers are prohibited throughout Sandy Hook.
- Fishing is permitted at any unguarded beach during the day. A permit for night fishing can be purchased at the Ranger Station or Visitor Center.
- Ticks are common. Avoid exposure and do a tick check after your visit.
- Poison Ivy grows throughout Sandy Hook. Learn to recognize and avoid its three waxy leaves. Avoid the cactus plants.
- Vehicles are not permitted off roads and roadside parking is prohibited.
- Speed limits are enforced by radar. Lower speeds reduce the possibility of accidents with wildlife and ensures pedestrian safety.
- The Multiuse Pathway extends five miles from the park entrance to the Fort Hancock ferry landing and can be used by pedestrians, bicycles, and other non-motorized vehicles. Bicycles on the road are subject to motor vehicle laws.

Gateway National Recreation Area

Gateway National Recreation Area is one of more than 380 parks that make up the National Park System. Gateway preserves sites in and around New York Harbor. There are units of Gateway in Staten Island, Queens and Brooklyn, New York, and here at Sandy Hook, New Jersey.

New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail

Sandy Hook is a site on the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail, a partnership program with the State of New Jersey and the National Park Service that highlights resources along New Jersey's coast.

For more information about visiting Sandy Hook or for a calendar of events write: Sandy Hook Visitor Center, Gateway NRA, PO Box 530, Fort Hancock, NJ 07732 or phone 732-872-5970. Or visit our web site at: www.nps.gov/gate

