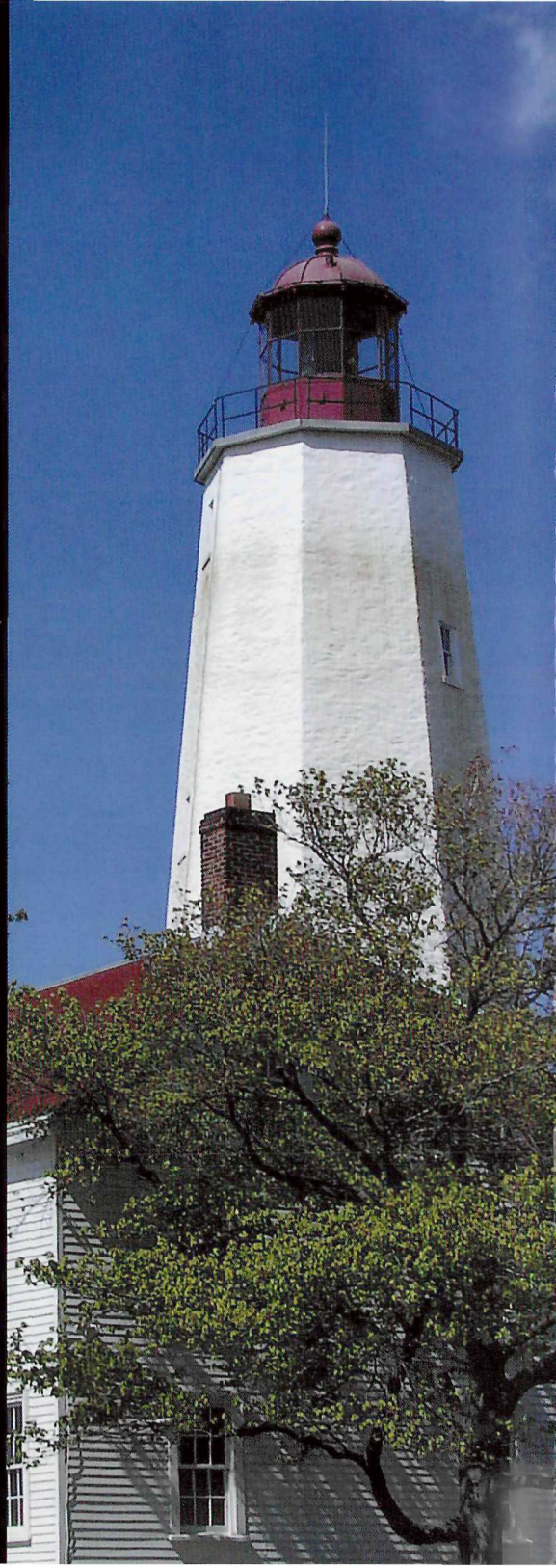




Gateway National Recreation Area  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior

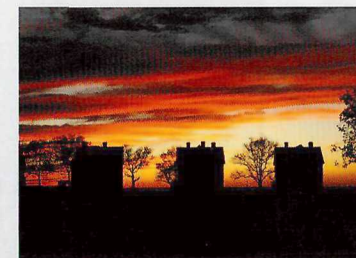
# Sandy Hook

Fort Hancock and Sandy Hook Proving Ground National Historic Landmark



# Sandy Hook

Sandy Hook is a barrier beach at the northern end of the New Jersey Shore. Its location at the entrance to New York Harbor assured Sandy Hook's importance for coastal and harbor defense. For more than 200 years most of the peninsula has been a federal reserve. This military presence both shaped Sandy Hook's history and assured its preservation as open space. During the summer, visitors enjoy swimming and strolling the beach. Any time of year there are opportunities for birding, fishing, hiking or discovering the park's natural resources and historic sites, including America's oldest lighthouse.



## Nature and history preserved

The natural forces of wind and waves are constantly changing the shoreline of Sandy Hook. Sand dunes, grasslands, ponds, salt marshes, shrub thickets, and maritime forests make up the coastal habitats of the Sandy Hook peninsula.

A 264 acre maritime forest contains the greatest concentration of American Holly on the East Coast. A number of threatened and endangered species including piping plover and sea-beach amaranth can be found. Sandy Hook's critical location along the

Atlantic Flyway enhances birding opportunities especially during spring and fall migrations.

Since 1764, the Sandy Hook Lighthouse has been a beacon guiding ships through New York Harbor. Sandy Hook's former US Life-Saving Station, 1894, housed the paid crews called surfmen. These surfmen risked their lives saving shipwrecked victims just off shore.

Sandy Hook has a long military history. During the American Revolution

the Lighthouse was defended by British Loyalists, ensuring British Navy access to New York's Harbor. The U.S. Army first fortified Sandy Hook during the War of 1812 and later tested weapons at the Sandy Hook Proving Ground. During the 1890s, Fort Hancock and its gun batteries were built to defend the harbor and protect New York City from attack by sea. Anti-aircraft guns were later added, as were Nike surface-to-air missiles in the 1950's. Today, some of the fort's buildings are used by educational and environmental groups.

## To Enjoy Your Visit

- ***Sandy Hook practices the principles of Leave No Trace. Take your trash & recyclables home.***
- Swim only at guarded beaches and follow lifeguard instructions. Swimming and alcohol do not mix.
- Pets must be leashed at all times. To protect nesting shorebirds, pets are banned from ocean beaches from March 15 through September 15.
- Open fires are not permitted.
- Metal detectors are prohibited.
- Do not enter closed areas. Stay off gun batteries and sea walls.
- Glass containers are prohibited throughout Sandy Hook.
- Both ticks and poison ivy are common. Avoid exposure.
- Vehicles are not permitted off roads. Roadside parking is prohibited.
- Speed limits are enforced by radar.



**Gateway National Recreation Area** is one of the more than 400 parks making up the National Park System. Gateway preserves sites in New York Harbor. There are units of Gateway at Staten Island, Queens and Brooklyn in New York and here at Sandy Hook, New Jersey.



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.



# Planning Your Visit

Sandy Hook is open all year long; 5AM - 9PM (Apr 1 - Oct 31) and 5AM - 8 PM (Nov 1 - Mar 31) .

The **Sandy Hook Visitor Center** is located in the Lighthouse Keepers' Quarters, Fort Hancock. Hours vary seasonally.

Fort Hancock is a great place to explore. Visit the Mortar Battery, Battery Potter, and History House, a restored home on Officers Row. Most sites are open during the summer on weekends.

The Sandy Hook Lighthouse is open daily, 1PM - 4:30PM, year round. The **Keepers Quarters** has exhibits on NJ Lighthouses. The **Keepers**

**Barn** features a Lighthouse history video.

Sandy Hook is a prime spot for **birding**. Try Plum Island, the Horseshoe Cove salt marsh, Spermaceti Cove boardwalk, North Pond and the fields at Fort Hancock.



**Hiking trails** begin at Beach Area E and Area M near Nine-Gun Battery. Some area may be closed due to spring

and summer shorebird nesting areas.

**Surf fishing** is permitted at all beaches except when lifeguards are on duty. An annual pass for nighttime fishing can be purchased at the Entrance Station or Visitor Center.

A **multi-use pathway (MUP)** shared by bicyclists, skaters and pedestrians, extends 7 miles from the park entrance to Fort Hancock.

**Picnics:** Charcoal grilling is permitted only at Guardian Park. The North Beach Observation Deck has tables and a view of New York Harbor.

## Summer on the Hook

Lifeguards are on duty 10AM - 6PM at five ocean beaches from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day. Swim only at guarded beaches.

Rip currents are powerful currents of water flowing away from the shore. Before you go to the beach, learn what you need to do "Break the Grip of the Rip."

Summer weekends can be busy. When parking areas are full, the park closes until spaces become available.

There is a parking fee charged for beach areas B, C, D, E, G, I.

J, and K, from 7AM - 5PM during the lifeguard season. Daily and season parking passes are available at the Fee Plaza.

The Interagency Senior and Access Passes give a 50% discount on parking. The Military Pass offers free beach parking. The National Park Pass is not accepted for beach parking.

For more information

Visit our website:  
[www.nps.gov/gate](http://www.nps.gov/gate)

Visit our facebook page:  
[www.facebook.com/GatewayNPS](http://www.facebook.com/GatewayNPS)

Sandy Hook Visitor Center:  
(732) 872-5970

To report an emergency:  
(732) 872-5900

