

WELCOME TO
ALCATRAZ ISLAND



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VISITOR INFO

ALCATRAZ ISLAND
ONE OF THE GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL PARKS

Carved by natural and human forces, Alcatraz served the army as fortress and military prison, and the Department of Justice as a maximum-security federal penitentiary. Today, this once-desolate island in the center of San Francisco Bay is a national parkland with historic gardens, tidepools, bird colonies, and bay views beyond compare. Enjoy your visit to one of America's most fascinating National Park sites.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Hours of Operation, Ferry Schedule

The first ferry for the island leaves at 9:00 AM and runs between the island and San Francisco at about 30- to 40-minute intervals. In the summer, the island closes at 6:30 PM. During the fall, winter, and spring months, the closing time is 4:30 PM. Evening tours are also available.

Alcatraz Night Tour

The Alcatraz Night Tour makes it possible for visitors to experience the island in the evening. Special programs on a variety of Alcatraz topics, smaller crowds, and dramatic evening views of the San Francisco skyline are among the Night Tour's attractions. Some sections of the island open during the day are not open at night. For schedules, prices, ticket availability, and purchase, see www.alcatrazcruises.com

Don't worry—you won't miss the boat! Ferries travel at approximately 30-minute intervals between the city and the island during the day. See posted schedules.

Island Closures, Ticket Availability

Alcatraz is closed only on Christmas and New Year's Day or in the event of extreme weather. In summer months and around holiday weekends, tickets sell out as early as a week in advance.

Weather

The weather can be unpredictable and may change suddenly. Fog and wind are common in the summer and winter days can be rainy. Dress in layers and wear comfortable shoes.

Food Service

No food service is available on the island. Bottled water is for sale at the dock-level store. Any food brought onto the island must be consumed at the dock; a picnic area is provided. Food service is available on the ferries.

Smoking

Smoking is only allowed at the landing dock. The rest of the island is a no-smoking zone.

ON THE ISLAND

- Some sections of Alcatraz are unsafe and thus closed to public visitation. These areas are well-marked by fences or barricades. DO NOT enter these areas.
- Collecting of any sort is prohibited. The plants, animal life, and historic structures are protected by law.
- DO NOT feed or chase birds on Alcatraz.
- The distance from the dock to the cellhouse at the top of the island is about 1/4 mile (.4 km) and the elevation change is 130 feet (40 meters), equivalent to a 13-story climb. (See "Accessibility" section.)

- With the exception of bottled water, food and drinks are only allowed in the dock area. Please dispose of your trash in the receptacles provided.
- Alcohol is not allowed on the island.



Restrooms are located at the dock and at the top of the hill, near the front entrance of the prison building.

Interpretive Programs

Outdoor interpretive walks are offered throughout the day by NPS rangers and volunteers. The walks highlight the island's military history, famous inmates, escapes, natural history, historic gardens and the American Indian occupation. Program titles and locations are posted at the dock and in the cellhouse.

Self-Guided Tour

Explore the island and find out more about its history and attractions—purchase a copy of *Discover Alcatraz* (\$1.00), a self-guiding brochure available in English, Spanish, Italian, French, German, and Japanese. Companion brochures, *Escapes*, *Fortress Alcatraz*, and *Alcatraz Nature and Gardens*, are also available. Your purchase of these brochures, as well as other items available in the bookstores, helps support the preservation and renovation of Alcatraz Island.

Orientation Video—"Alcatraz: Stories from the Rock"

Stop by the theater, which is 50 yards up the road from the dock, for an excellent introduction to Alcatraz. The 17-minute video presentation is open-captioned in English and Spanish.

Exhibits

Behind the theater, look for exhibits covering various periods in Alcatraz's history, including the federal penitentiary (1934–1963) era. An award-winning open-captioned video, *We Hold the Rock*, presents the story of the occupation of the island by the Indians of All Tribes (1969–1971).

Audio Tour

Join former Alcatraz inmates, correctional officers, and residents as they reminisce about life on Alcatraz in this award-winning 45-minute recorded tour. Available in English, Spanish, Italian, German, Japanese, French, Mandarin, and Dutch. The audio tour is included in the admission price and is available in the cellhouse.

Bookstores

Memorabilia, apparel, film, videos, and books about the island's rich history are available for sale in the bookstores, which are located at the dock, near the theater, and in the prison.

Administrative Information

The National Park Service administers Alcatraz Island as part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The park is also part of the Central California Coast International Biosphere Reserve, designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to promote education and preservation of habitats of international significance.

www.nps.gov/goga www.nps.gov/alca

ISLAND ACCESSIBILITY

Much of Alcatraz is steep and hilly, so be prepared to walk long distances uphill.



Visitors unable to make the climb up Alcatraz's steep road may take advantage of SEAT—Sustainable Easy Access Transport—an electric shuttle that runs on a regular basis between the dock and the prison building. Boarding is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

There are no wheelchairs available for loan either on Alcatraz Island or at the Pier 33 Alcatraz Landing.

Only certified service animals for the disabled are allowed on the island.

Large-print transcriptions of the Cellhouse Audio Tour and other interpretive materials are available upon request.

The following areas are fully accessible:

- Pier 33 ticketing, waiting, and boarding areas
- All Alcatraz Cruises™ boats to Alcatraz
- Alcatraz dock area
- Prison building—main floor and basement
- All bookstores, museum displays, theater, and restrooms



MAINLAND ACCESSIBILITY

The Alcatraz landing at Pier 33 in San Francisco is accessible. In addition, an accessible drop-off zone is available at the Alcatraz landing entrance for special-needs visitors arriving by automobile.

Commercial parking lots near the Alcatraz landing are required by law to provide accessible parking spaces.

For further information on Alcatraz accessibility, please phone the National Park Service at (415) 561-4900; or, if you're using a TTY, phone the Federal Relay Service number: (800) 877-8339 or visit the Alcatraz Cruises website at www.alcatrazcruises.com.

FOR YOUR SAFETY

Walking Hazards

Take your time walking up the steep hill. Be alert for uneven pavement, cracks, steps, and other walking hazards. If you have any heart, breathing, or mobility concerns, please be extra cautious. There is a tram available at the dock.

First Aid

Available at the Dock Information Station and at the Cellhouse Information Desk. Contact any staff member for assistance. It takes at least 30 minutes to reach a hospital from Alcatraz Island.

ALCATRAZ MOST WANTED—THE TOP TEN QUESTIONS ANSWERED

When and why did the prison close?

Deteriorating buildings and high operating costs, (for example, the lack of a sewage system) ended Alcatraz's days as a federal prison. The last inmates left the island on March 21, 1963, and the prison officially closed its doors a few months later.

How many prisoners were housed here? What was the total? The average number?

Alcatraz was never filled to capacity. The average number was approximately 260, the lowest (during regular operations) was 222, and the highest, was 320. Although 1,576 inmate numbers were issued, the total number of actual prisoners was fewer because some inmates served multiple terms on Alcatraz and there was no consistent policy regarding giving returning inmates new numbers or reissuing them their previous number.

How many cells are there?

There are four cellblocks in the prison. A Block was not used to house inmates during the federal penitentiary years. Cells in B and C blocks (336 cells) were considered "general population." Unruly inmates were "segregated" in D Block (42 cells), also known as Isolation.

Which cells did Al Capone and Robert "The Birdman" Stroud occupy?

Prisoners were moved from cell to cell throughout their time on the Rock. Al Capone was no exception, and during his time at Alcatraz (1934-1938), he spent time in various cells including a short stretch on D Block (Isolation) following a fistfight with another inmate. He was eventually transferred to a medical prison facility in southern California. Robert Stroud spent no time in a general population cell. After arriving on the island in 1942, he was placed to D Block and in 1948 to the hospital wing. He remained there until 1959, when he was transferred to a medical facility for federal prisoners in Springfield, Missouri.

How many correctional officers worked here?

It required 90 officers to cover three 8-hour shifts and to fill in for those on annual and sick leave. Beginning in the 1950s, the number of correctional officers was reduced due to budget cuts.

Where did the correctional officers and their families live?

Some lived in San Francisco, but many lived on the island. Building 64 included a number of apartments, and there were three apartment buildings, four wood-frame houses, and a duplex on the Parade Ground. The warden lived in a large house near the prison building. Some of these buildings were destroyed by fire in 1970, and others were demolished by the government a short time later.

Did anyone ever escape? What about the 1962 "dummy head" escape?

In the 29 years that Alcatraz served as a federal penitentiary, 36 prisoners tried to escape the Rock; all but five were recaptured or otherwise accounted for. Three who were unaccounted for participated in the same breakout, the June 1962 escape, immortalized in the movie *Escape from Alcatraz* with Clint Eastwood. Purchase a brochure on the dock to learn more.

Does Alcatraz have a gas chamber?

No. Alcatraz had no "death row" or any facility for executions.

How many prisoners died here? What happened to their bodies?

Eight inmates were murdered by other inmates, five committed suicide, and fifteen died of natural causes, including disease. Bodies were sent back to family members or, in a few cases, buried in local paupers' graves.

Does the federal government plan to re-open Alcatraz as a prison? Is there a modern-day equivalent of Alcatraz?

Alcatraz is now a unit of the National Park Service and will remain so. The modern "super-max" equivalent of Alcatraz is in Florence, Colorado.





MORE GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL PARKS YOU MAY ENJOY

- Tomales Bay**
This long, narrow body of water owes its shape to the infamous San Andreas Fault.
- Olema Valley**
Victorian farms and grazing cattle reflect a soft, rural charm.
- Stinson Beach**
White sand, surf, shorebirds, and the ocean's roar.
- Muir Woods**
Coast redwoods in all their glory, lush streamside plant life, birds galore.
- Point Bonita Lighthouse**
Heart-stopping views at the continent's edge.
- Marin Headlands**
Miles of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails; solitude; and geology up-close and available for inspection.
- Fort Point**
Civil War-era brick fort, one of the finest examples of the mason's art in the West.
- Presidio of San Francisco**
Two hundred years of military history at the Golden Gate.

- Crissy Field**
Incredible shoreline park—be sure to stop by the Warming Hut.
- Lands End**
Many a ship perished on the rocks here; now a local favorite for its ocean views and trails.
- Cliff House**
A restored treasure from the heyday of Adolph Sutro—see nearby Sutro Baths and Sutro Heights.
- Ocean Beach**
San Francisco's widest and longest expanse of sand.
- Milagra Ridge**
Trails meander through this intimate sloping park area, the site of a major habitat restoration effort.
- Sweeney Ridge**
Wildflowers and 360° panoramas—and the location of the Portola "Bay Discovery" site.
- Mori Point**
Dramatic views of the San Mateo coast from one of the newest areas of the park.
- Phleger Estate**
Shady creekside trails, picnic spots, and remnants of the Bay Area's 19th-century logging industry.



MORE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AREAS TO EXPLORE

- San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park**
www.nps.gov/safr
- Point Reyes National Seashore**
www.nps.gov/pore
- Rosie the Riveter/WW II Homefront National Historical Park**
www.nps.gov/rori
- Eugene O'Neill National Historic Site**
www.nps.gov/euon
- Port Chicago National Memorial**
www.nps.gov/poch
- John Muir National Historic Site**
www.nps.gov/jomu
- Pinnacles National Monument**
www.nps.gov/pinn

- Lands within the Authorized Boundaries of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area
- Lands Managed by the Golden Gate National Recreation Area
- Lands Managed by the Presidio Trust
- Point Reyes National Seashore



PARKS FOR ALL FOREVER™
To support the parks, visit www.parksconservancy.org

For more information contact the Golden Gate National Recreation Area online: www.nps.gov/goga, or by phone at (415) 561-4900. Contact Alcatraz Island online at www.nps.gov/alcatraz, or by phone at (415) 561-4700. Source map of Alcatraz by Haisam Hussien. Source map of Golden Gate National Recreation Area by Ellixir Design. Brochure design, Meg Coughlin. Printed on recycled paper in the US by Fong and Fong.
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