



**CAPE
HATTERAS**



Between broad, shallow sounds and foaming ocean surf, Cape Hatteras National Seashore lies on the windswept Outer Banks of North Carolina. On these lonely barrier islands, opportunities for stimulating outdoor recreation and rewarding explorations in history and nature await you.

SAND, SEA, AND SKY

On this long strip of barrier islands, the sea, the winds, and the land have contended for many human lifetimes, reshaping shore and landscape in a pattern of never-ending change. Perhaps nowhere are there more beautiful patterns in the surf than off the point of Cape Hatteras. Ocean waves meeting and breaking over Diamond Shoals weave herring bone designs, while scalloped sheets of surf spread obliquely along the beach at either side of the point.

Matching the vivid colors of ocean sunsets and sunrises, wildflowers grow profusely in the humid climate, and blossom over a long growing season. Even in December the sandy flats behind the barrier are alive with flowering gaillardia, a hardy western plant brought to the Outer Banks many years ago.

Of course the sand beaches themselves are a prime attraction. But when getting to them, be sure to walk—never drive—across the barrier dune. It is dangerous even to pull off the highway into the sand to park; so park your car only in designated areas.

Westward from the elbow of Cape Hatteras and near the village of Buxton is the widest part of the Outer Banks, almost 3 miles across. From here Buxton Woods extends westward for more than 8 miles. Fine stands of loblolly pine, American holly, and live oak cover the higher ridges and slopes. Between the ridges lie marshy valleys, some with freshwater ponds. Bordering the ponds and marshes are dense banks of ferns, shrubs, and clinging vines.

Little community or family cemeteries and scattered lonely graves along the Banks hold the remains of many heroes of the Life-Saving Service, later to become the Coast Guard, and of victims of the sea. It is said six sailors from the ill-fated Monitor lie in an unmarked common grave at the foot of a large redcedar 600 yards west of Cape Hatteras Lighthouse. Their famed ironclad ship lies in her watery grave a few miles southeast of the lighthouse on the dread Diamond Shoals.





All eight villages within the seashore are on the sound side of the barrier strip that separates them from the raging sea. In colonial times, members of Virginia and Maryland families of English, Scottish, and Irish descent settled these isolated banks. They were attracted by the opportunities for stock raising, but many of them turned to the sea for a livelihood. Some became pilots and guided ocean vessels across shallow Pamlico Sound to mainland ports. Many became fishermen; fishing has always been an important occupation on the Outer Banks.

The National Seashore provides enjoyment for almost everyone who has longed for adventure and for contact with isolated places. Coast Guard stations and towering waves remind you of man's heroic struggles against the sea. Through the inlets, the waters move from ocean to sound and from sound to ocean; with them move schools of fish. Breaking surf upon miles of sand invites you to fish or walk the long beach with sea and sand and restless wind.

HISTORY OF THE OUTER BANKS

In 1585, Roanoke Island was the scene of the first English attempt at colonization of the New World. The venture lasted about 10 months. A second attempt in 1587 was no more successful. The fate of the members of this colony remains a mystery. (The settlements are commemorated by Fort Raleigh National Historic Site, also a unit of the National Park System.)

On the sandy plain at the base of nearby Kill Devil Hill, in 1903, two brothers, Wilbur and Orville Wright, altered the pattern of world history when they made man's first successful flight in a power-driven airplane. (This site is preserved as Wright Brothers National Memorial, another unit of the National Park System.)

During the centuries between the settlement attempts on Roanoke Island and the first flight, legend and history have developed side by side along the Outer Banks. Partially buried in the sands or submerged in the waters are bits of wreckage, the remains of ships that fell victim to storms, accidents, or human violence.

Three lighthouses are within the National Seashore: Bodie Island Lighthouse, near Oregon Inlet; Cape Hatteras Lighthouse, overlooking the Diamond Shoals; and Ocracoke Lighthouse, in the village of Ocracoke. The lighthouse at Cape Hatteras is the second erected there. The first was partially destroyed during the Civil War; the base is still visible.

The present Cape Hatteras Lighthouse first flashed its warning out into the Atlantic on December 16, 1870, the year it was built. Almost twice the height of the original tower, it is 208 feet from foundation to roof peak. Its first-order light is 192 feet above mean low water and is normally visible 20 miles at sea. This tower, tallest lighthouse in the United States, is ascended via 265 steps. For information about visiting hours, inquire at any National Park Service ranger station or visitor center.

The story of the neighboring sea and the heroic Outer Bankers who followed it is told in part in exhibits at the visitor center, near the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse.



NATURAL FEATURES

Several thousand years ago, sea level stood considerably above its present height and the shoreline was far back on today's mainland. During the last glacial period, as more of the world's water was bound up in ice by glaciers farther north, sea level here gradually dropped to produce a shoreline several miles to the seaward of the present one. When the continental ice sheet melted, sea level rose to its approximate present height, creating Pamlico Sound and flooding other low areas. Today the sea is still rising upon the lands, as shown by recordings of tide gages in various parts of the world.

The present shoreline has been built up by the action of waves and currents—waves pounding on what first were shoals farther out to sea, and longshore currents moving great quantities of sand from sources to the north. These natural forces continue to shape and reshape the Outer Banks; currents and waves sometimes change the beach level within a few hours. The winds are constantly moving the sand—building dunes and ridges and tearing them down—with a net movement toward the southwest.

The largest dunes on the Atlantic Coast are near Nags Head, just north of the National Seashore. Along the beach, wind has also piled up lower dunes, which serve as a sea barrier. This process has been accelerated by the installation of fences to act as catchments.

The sands off the point of Cape Hatteras actually continue underwater as gigantic shoals for 12 miles out into the Atlantic. In places they almost reach the surface, and on a stormy day you can stand at the cape and watch the waves come together over the shoals in an awesome display of savage fury.

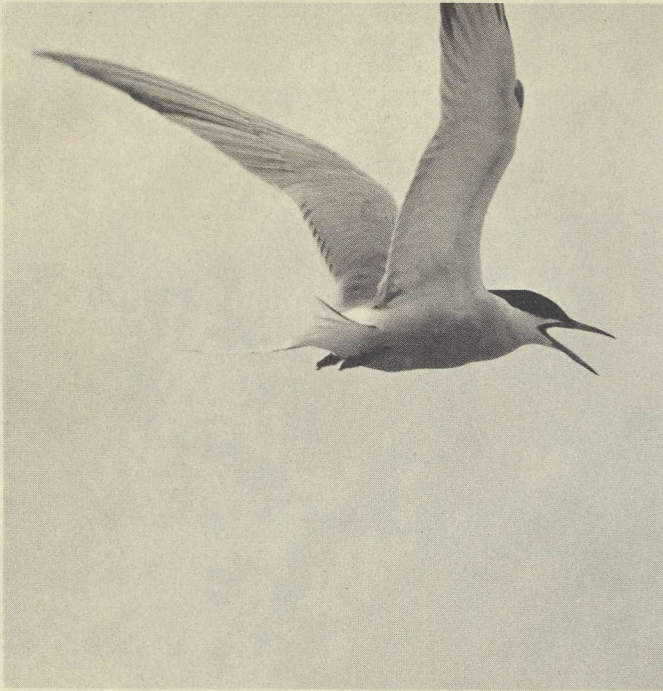
Interesting features of this coast are the inlets connecting the ocean with broad, shallow sounds. New inlets are born in great storms; they usually have a lifetime of a few hundred years or less. Nine miles south of Oregon Inlet, the highway passes over land where until 1922, and briefly in the 30's, was New Inlet. The remains of the bridge that spanned this inlet are plainly visible several hundred yards west of the highway. Another such inlet was cut through Hatteras Island to the sound by a northeaster in March 1962. This opening was filled by the U.S. Corps of Engineers a year later.

About 300 species of birds have been recorded in the National Seashore. The ponds, shores, and shrubby growth around Bodie Lighthouse offer the greatest year-round variety. Both migratory and nonmigratory waterfowl use the National Seashore as wintering and nesting grounds. About 40 species of shorebirds have been recorded here.

Several heavily traveled lanes of waterfowl traffic converge on the north end of Hatteras Island, at Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge, administered by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. It is a way station on the Atlantic flyway, and is the southernmost winter home of the greater snow goose—accommodating at times several thousands of these birds. Canada geese, brant, whistling swans, and many species of ducks also winter here. The refuge has the only large concentration of nesting gadwall along the Atlantic seaboard, and it is one of the finest places to observe the migration of shorebirds.



THE SEASONS



Because of surrounding waters, spring develops more slowly here than on the nearby mainland. Summer weather is commonly warm and pleasant. Despite high humidity, comfort is usually maintained on hot days by strong, steady breezes. Afternoon thundershowers are common, especially from July on. One or two periods of unsettled weather can be expected in each summer month. The northeaster blows often last about 3 days, bringing cloudy skies, chilly winds, and frequent rains. Hurricanes are not common; when they occur it is usually in August or September. Ample warning is given to enable people to leave low-lying areas.

Surrounding waters hold their heat into autumn, when cold periods are often short and separated by long stretches of mild, sunny days. Such pleasant days here extend far into winter; but changes to cold, windy weather can be very sudden. High humidity and fresh to strong northerly winds make winter weather seem much colder than temperatures indicate.

The seasons other than summer have their own appeal, and also offer opportunities for recreational activities. Visitors are fewer; those seeking solitude are more likely to find it in the off season. Visitor centers are usually open. Bird watching is interesting the year around, with concentrations of birds during spring and autumn migrations and during winter when spectacular species such as snow geese are seen in great numbers. Sport fishing begins in April and continues into November. From November through April, camping is recommended only for hardy individuals well equipped for cold and wind.

CAPE HATTERAS NATIONAL SEASHORE

To Elizabeth City, N.C.
& Norfolk, Va.

- A Airstrip
- ▲ Campground
- CG Coast Guard Station
- 🐟 Fishing Pier
- 🏰 Lighthouse
- ▬ National Seashore Area
- T Nature Trail
- S Swimming Beach
- 🕒 Visitor Center and Ranger Station

To Washington, N.C. & Greenville, N.C.



ATLANTIC

WRIGHT BROTHERS
NATIONAL MEMORIAL

FORT RALEIGH
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

BODIE ISLAND
NAGS HEAD

OCEAN

PEA ISLAND
NATIONAL
WILDLIFE REFUGE

Ocean and Bird
Observation
Refuge
Headquarters





PLACES OF INTEREST

Bodie Island (Whalebone Junction to Oregon Inlet). When you enter the National Seashore from Nags Head you are on Bodie Island (now the tip of a peninsula) at Whalebone Junction. Bodie Island Visitor Center, 6½ miles south of the park entrance, has special exhibits, slide programs, and literature which tell the Cape Hatteras story and can help you plan your stay on the Outer Banks.

The Bodie Island lighthouse, operated by the U.S. Coast Guard, is closed to the public. Behind the lighthouse is the lighthouse pond, where water birds and shorebirds can be observed all year.

The Coquina Beach day-use area, with facilities for surf bathing and picnicking, is 5½ miles south of the park entrance.

The Oregon Inlet Marina provides charter boat service for inlet and Gulf Stream fishing. Visitors to the marina also enjoy watching the boats arrive with their catches of dolphin, marlin, blue fish, flounder, and others.

After leaving the bridge across Oregon Inlet, you enter the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge. Pea Island Campground and the Oregon Inlet Coast Guard Station are to the left of the highway. Although within, and a part of, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge is maintained and operated by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. Farther south, just beyond the refuge subheadquarters, look for the abandoned bridge across former New Inlet.

Swimming. Lifeguard service is provided from June 15 through Labor Day at Coquina Beach on Bodie Island, Cape Point Campground on Hatteras Island, and Seaside Campground on Ocracoke Island. For your safety, we urge use of the guarded beaches for swimming; strong and shifting currents, particularly common during heavy weather, can be very hazardous. Beware of tidal currents and deep waters especially near inlets.

Boating. The sound offers an extensive area for small boats. The villages and the Oregon Inlet Fishing Center on Bodie Island have launching facilities. Oregon Inlet, Ocracoke, and Hatteras village have docking facilities for boats of party-boat size.

Outboards in ocean waters can be extremely hazardous, again, especially near inlets, where shore currents and rough waters have meant disaster to small boats and their operators. Small boats should be confined to the sounds. For further information about boating, consult a park ranger.

Sport fishing is excellent in the surrounding waters. Channel bass arrive in early April and leave in mid-May. They return in September and remain through November. They can be caught from piers, by surf casting, or by trolling from boats. Autumn is best for surf casting.

Bluefish, marlin, tuna, dolphin, and mackerel arrive early in May, and remain through October. These are usually taken by deep-sea trolling. Smaller fishes of many kinds are taken with bait. Charter boats are available at Oregon Inlet and in Hatteras and Ocracoke villages.

The three Outer Banks villages a few miles beyond the wildlife refuge are outside the National Seashore boundary. Old Chicamacomico Coast Guard Station in the village of Rodanthe is a point of historical interest, but not open for visitors. Below these villages, you will drive through spacious areas of the National Seashore before entering the village of Buxton. Take the park road starting on the eastern edge of Buxton to the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse, Museum of the Sea Visitor Center, swimming beach, and Cape Point Campground. The Buxton Woods Nature Trail is about 1 mile west of the lighthouse on the road to the campgrounds.

Ocracoke Island (Hatteras Inlet to Ocracoke Inlet). Until recently Ocracoke was an isolated place, hard to reach from the mainland. Now a free ferry crosses Hatteras Inlet and a toll ferry operates between Cedar Island and Ocracoke, bringing visitors with cars and camper trailers. Amid low dunes and trees and shrubs dwarfed by salt winds, a hard-surfaced road runs the length of the island.

Ocracoke Village, at the southwest end of the island, retains much of the charm of isolation. Picturesque live oaks and redcedars shade its sandy lanes. In and near the village are some old cemeteries, the oldest lighthouse on the Outer Banks, and a small National Park Service visitor center. West of the village is Teach's Hole, traditional site of the battle in which the pirate Blackbeard was killed.

THINGS TO DO AND SEE

Guided walks, talks, nature trails, and exhibits are provided to acquaint you with the human and natural history of Cape Hatteras National Seashore. The National Park Service cordially invites you to attend these events, offered from mid-June through Labor Day without charge. At Bodie Island Visitor Center, incoming visitors are invited to see a short slide program giving a preview of the National Seashore area, its attractions and facilities. Scheduled events originate from visitor centers at Bodie Island, Cape Hatteras, and Ocracoke Village. Schedules of all events can be obtained at each visitor center. Groups can arrange for off-season interpretive services by writing to the superintendent. Naturalists or historians are usually on hand at visitor centers to answer your questions about the area.

Camping is permitted only at designated campgrounds, shown on the map. Campsites are on shadeless, wind-swept, sandy areas, so awnings and long tent stakes are advised. Comfort stations, outdoor showers, drinking water, tables, and grills are available at most locations. Utility connections are not provided. Although we fog for mosquitoes we suggest that you bring netting and insect repellent to extend this protection. Detailed information about camping can be obtained at ranger stations and visitor centers.

Hunting is confined to migratory waterfowl and must be done under National Park Service regulations within the National Seashore; it is restricted to definite areas. No hunting is permitted within the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge and adjacent closed waters.

HOW TO REACH THE AREA

Routes to Cape Hatteras National Seashore are indicated on good road maps, and on the map in this folder. There is daily bus service to Manteo from Norfolk, Va., and Elizabeth City, N.C.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Meals, lodging, groceries, camping supplies, and gasoline are available in the villages and towns on Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands, in the resort towns just north of the National Seashore, and on Roanoke Island.

ADMINISTRATION

Cape Hatteras National Seashore, established on January 12, 1953, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

A superintendent, whose address is Box 457, Manteo, N.C. 27954, is in immediate charge of the seashore. Headquarters for the National Seashore, Fort Raleigh National Historic Site, and Wright Brothers National Memorial are at the north end of Roanoke Island, near the Fort Raleigh Visitor Center. The manager of Pea Island Refuge may be reached at Box 606, Manteo, N.C. 27954.

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR—the Nation's principal natural resource agency—has a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that our renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.

PLEASE LEAVE THE VEGETATION FOR OTHERS TO ENJOY
Grasses and other plants growing along the miles of sand, in part the results of careful planning at considerable cost, are vital to land stabilization. By not disturbing the vegetation, you will help to conserve this scenic area.



Department of the Interior, National Park Service