Quoddy Head State Park encompasses 542 acres at the tip of America’s easternmost peninsula, offering opportunities to visit an historic lighthouse, picnic and hike upon 5 miles of scenic trails. From the candy-striped West Quoddy Head Light, Maine’s easternmost lighthouse, visitors can look out over Quoddy Channel (which divides the U.S. and Canada) to the towering red cliffs of Grand Manan Island in New Brunswick.

Commissioned by President Thomas Jefferson, West Quoddy Head Light was first built in 1808. The present tower and house, which date back to 1858, were staffed by resident lightkeepers until 1988 when the U.S. Coast Guard automated the light.

The Park offers some of Maine’s best wildlife watching. Visitors in summer may spot humpback, minke and finback whales offshore, along with rafts of eider, scoter and old squaw ducks. Kittiwakes, gannets, black-bellied plovers, ruddy turnstones and purple sandpipers all can be seen at times roosting on Sable Rock. During spring and fall migration periods, hundreds of shorebirds congregate near the Park’s western boundary at Lubec Flats and Carrying Place Cove (named for a canoe portage site that Native Americans used). Birding opportunities continue into winter, with sea ducks, murre, and razorbill offshore and frequent bald eagles.

An easy, one-mile round-trip walk leads to an unusual coastal plateau bog (also known as a heath) with sub-arctic and arctic plants rarely seen south of Canada. Shrubs predominate, particularly black crowberry, baked appleberry and Labrador tea, along with carnivorous plants such as pitcher plants and sundews. A second bog at the property’s western boundary, Carrying Place Cove Bog, is a National Natural Landmark: [www.nps.gov/subjects/nationallandmarks/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationallandmarks/index.htm).

An 1858 third-order Fresnel lens that is 5.5 feet tall. The 15 red and white stripes, which make the station more visible in snow and fog, were added after the house and tower were reconstructed in 1858 when the original stone tower was replaced by brick. The tower is closed but visitors can enjoy the former lightkeeper’s quarters now staffed by West Quoddy Light Keepers Association.

The name Quoddy Head, which means “fertile and beautiful place,” comes from the Native American Passamaquoddy tribe (“People of the Dawn”). The park’s impressive black cliffs date back to the Silurian Age (roughly 420 million years ago) when volcanic magma rose up from under the ocean floor intruding much of the current acreage from several private landowners. As part of the Maine Lighthouse Program, in which the Coast Guard transferred title to 28 Maine lighthouses to nonprofit organizations or agencies, the deed to West Quoddy Head Light went temporarily to the Island Institute and in 1998 to the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands. The Bureau now manages the light, one of 63 active lighthouses along the coast of Maine, with assistance from the nonprofit West Quoddy Light Keepers Association.

The lighthouse was originally fueled by sperm whale oil, later by lard oil in the 1860s, then kerosene around 1880, and finally electricity in the 1890s. The light still shines, two white flashes every 15 seconds, 15-18 miles (24-29km.) out to sea through an 1858 third-order Fresnel lens that is 5.5 feet tall. The 15 red and white stripes, which make the station more visible in snow and fog, were added after the house and tower were reconstructed in 1858 when the original stone tower was replaced by brick. The tower is closed but visitors can enjoy the former lightkeeper’s quarters now staffed by West Quoddy Light Keepers Association.

The light, one of 63 active lighthouses along the coast of Maine, with assistance from the nonprofit West Quoddy Light Keepers Association.
Trails

Hikers may choose from five trails that wind through forest and wetlands and offer expansive coastal views. Trails closest to the parking area allow some wheelchair access. For shore access, use the stairs to the picnic area. Please be careful near high cliffs and bluffs and be prepared for wet terrain.

Bog Trail (1-mile round-trip from trailhead, the bog loop is 0.2 miles, easy), has a raised boardwalk and interpretive signs describing how the plants here adapt to high levels of acidic water and few nutrients. Please stay on the raised boardwalk to prevent damaging bog plants.

Coastal Trail (4-mile round-trip, moderate), affords more challenging terrain (and spectacular ocean views), with some steep and rocky sections. This trail passes Gulliver’s Hole (a narrow chasm formed from the erosion of a vertical fault in the volcanic gabbro rock); High Ledge (a 150-foot bluff); and Green Point (a large ledge overlooking where hikers can reach the beach).

Coast Guard Trail (1-mile, easy–moderate), allows easy access to a high cliff overlook typical of the “Bold Coast” with views north across the Lubec Channel to the town of Lubec. This trail was originally used by the lightkeepers when returning to the lighthouse. The first 0.5 miles of the western portion of the Coast Guard Trail to the overlook is accessible to motorized wheelchairs, and with assistance for non-motorized chairs.

Inland Trail (0.75-mile loop, easy–moderate), offers a walk through conifer woods rich in mosses and lichens and climbs steadily uphill to Green Point.

Thompson Trail (1.25 miles, easy), offers hiking inland between the Bog Trail and Coastal Trail. Carrying Place Cove offers 1,200 feet of sandy beach.

Special Considerations

The Park is often wreathed in fog that forms when warm, moist air from the mainland meets masses of cold air over the surrounding waters. Fog and sea breezes can make for chilly conditions, even in the height of summer, so wear layered clothing.

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Fires

May be built only in grills; use only charcoal.

Pets

Must be leashed, attended and under control at all times. Clean up their waste.

Visitors’ Voices

Tourists often express amazement at the sheer variety of wildlife present. They do not flush or become alarmed.

Pets

Must be leashed, attended and under control at all times. Clean up their waste.

Visitor Rules

To ensure a safe & pleasant visit for everyone:

Leave No Trace

Stay on trails or stairs to protect the headland’s fragile vegetation, and please do not pick or remove anything or disturb ground cover. Use the stairs by the picnic area to access the shore.

No Camping

For State Park camping locations visit www.campwithme.com

Picnic

On a carry-in, carry-out basis, and take refuse home to recycle. Intoxicating beverages are strictly prohibited.

Fires

May be built only in grills; use only charcoal.

Pets

Must be leashed, attended and under control at all times. Clean up their waste.

Trash

Carry out all trash.

Wildlife

Please do not feed, touch or disturb wildlife.

Watching

View or photograph them from a distance so they do not flush or become alarmed.

Hunting

No hunting is permitted within 1,000 feet of the lighthouse. Visit www.maine.gov/ifw for hunting laws.

Nearby Destinations

Quoddy Head State Park lies within the Downeast-Acadia Region (www.downeastacadia.com) that encompasses Hancock and Washington Counties and represents the easternmost corner of the United States. Nearby destinations include:

• Campbells Island, in New Brunswick has the historic Robertsville Campbello National Park and East Quoddy Light.

• Mowry Beach, a 4.8-acre preserve owned by the Quoddy Regional Land Trust, offers an accessible 2,100-foot trail and 1,800 feet of beachfront overlooking Lubec Narrows.

• Cobcscook Bay State Park in Edmunds offers a good base for exploring easternmost Maine with many waterfront camping sites.

For additional hiking opportunities, see the Common Path Guide available in area stores or from the Downeast Coastal Conservancy: 207-255-4500 or www.downeastcoastalconservancy.org.

Special Considerations

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In preparation, use the stairs by the picnic area to access the shore.

Do not leave valuables unattended in your vehicle.

Coast Guard Trail is accessible.

The first 0.5-miles of the western portion of the Coast Guard Trail is accessible to motorized wheelchairs, and with assistance for non-motorized chairs.

No hunting is permitted within 1,000 feet of the lighthouse. Visit www.maine.gov/ifw for hunting laws.