



Heceta Head Lighthouse Tours

May-September:
Daily, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

March, April, and October:
Friday-Monday, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Special tours and group visits can be arranged all year. Call 541-547-3416.



Nature
HISTORY
Discovery

Heceta Head Lighthouse



Off US 101, 13 miles
north of Florence

Day-use passes are required year round at Heceta Head Lighthouse State Scenic Viewpoint. On the driver's side of your dashboard, you must display:

- A state park daily permit, 12-month pass or 24-month pass; or
- A state park camping receipt, which is honored as a daily permit for those days a visitor is registered at a state park campground; or
- An Oregon Coast Passport—five-day or 12-month—good at some federal recreation sites as well as at selected state parks.

You can buy a state park daily permit at a parking area ticket machine. Passes also are sold by merchants in the vicinity, major state park offices and selected vendors throughout Oregon.

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
725 Summer St. NE, Suite C
Salem, OR 97301



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This brochure is available in alternative formats on request. Write to OPRD, 725 Summer St. NE, Suite C, Salem, OR 97301; or call (503) 986-0707 (for the hearing impaired 1-800-735-2900).

63400-8234 (07/09)

Sturdy, picturesque Heceta Head Lighthouse serves a dual purpose on its perch 205 feet above the Pacific Ocean. While continuing to aid mariners, its commanding presence lures landlubbers to a 549-acre park of trails, viewpoints, tide pools, wildlife habitat and sandy beach known as Heceta Head Lighthouse State Scenic Viewpoint.

The Headland

Discovery

It was named for Don Bruno de Heceta, who surveyed the Oregon coast while on a Royal Spanish Navy expedition in 1775. He was the first European to note the significant expanse of shallow water off the headland rising 1,000 feet above.

Settlement

Native Americans who sparsely populated the nearby coastal area until the late 19th century valued Heceta Head as a hunting and fishing destination. White homesteaders claimed 164 acres of the head in 1888, the same year the U.S. Lighthouse Board approved building a lighthouse on the promontory. The federal government bought 19 acres of the homestead to accommodate the light station.



1,000-foot-high Heceta Head protrudes into the Pacific Ocean.

Cover photo by John Emmons

Nature

Seabirds, including the common murre, nest offshore and on the rocky bluffs of the head. The rocks are part of the Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge. Spring and early summer are the best times for watching both the birds and migrating Gray whales.

The Lighthouse

A crew of 56 began building the light station in 1892. If sea conditions permitted, building materials were unloaded from ships anchored off the headland and rowed to shore on surfboats. Otherwise, wagons transported their supplies from cargo ships docked in Florence. Stones used in the construction came from Oregon's Clackamas River, east of Portland. Bricks for the lighthouse came from San Francisco.

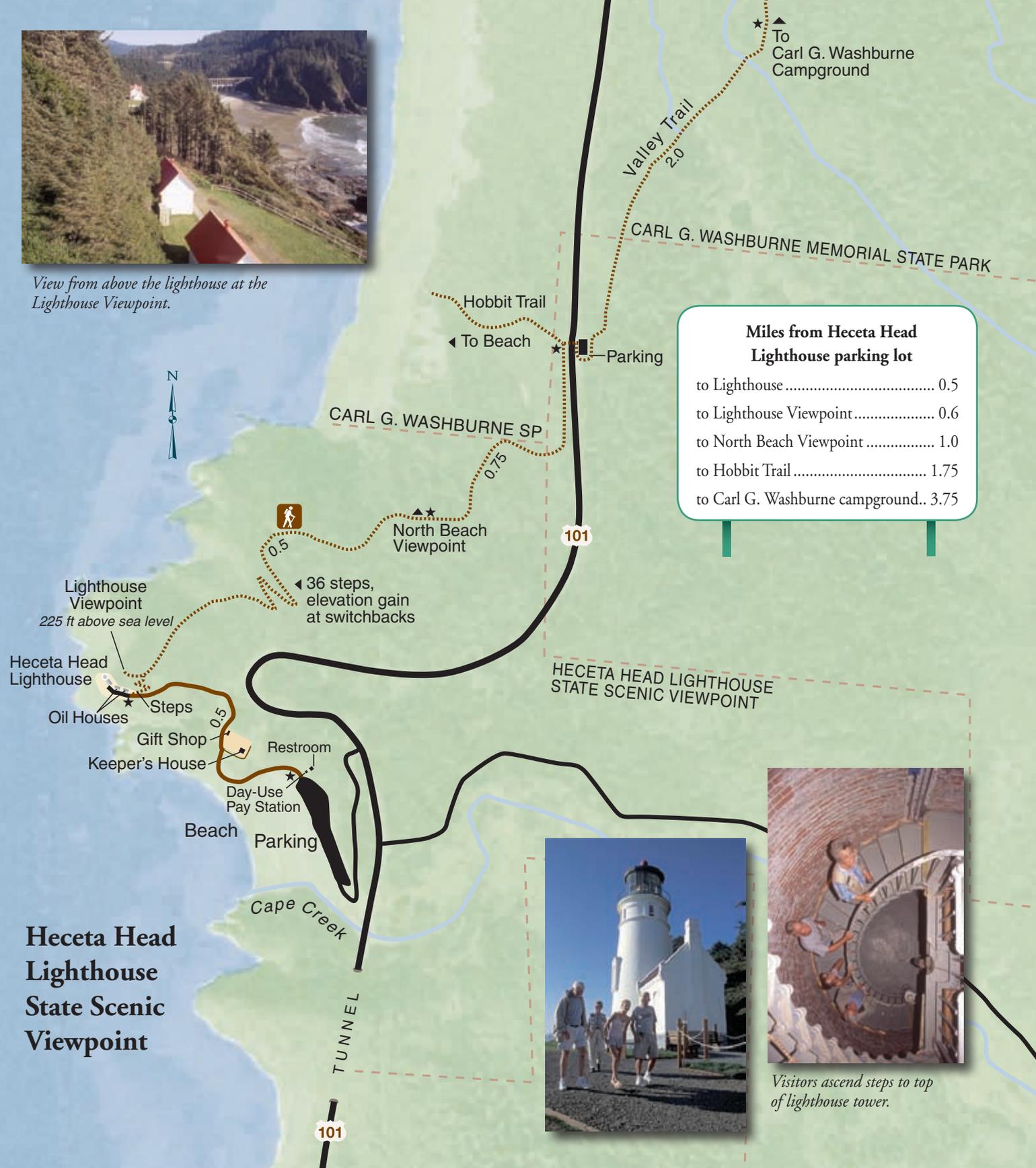
When the builders finished in August 1893, at a cost of \$80,000, the complex consisted of:

- The lighthouse with a 56-foot-high tower;
- A house for the head lightkeeper's family;
- Duplex housing for two assistant lightkeepers and their families;
- A barn, and
- Two kerosene oil storage buildings.

The lighthouse, the two oil houses and the assistant lightkeepers' house are the only structures still standing. They were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978. The assistant lightkeepers' house is now a bed and breakfast inn with facilities for group events. The head lightkeeper's house was sold for \$10 in 1940 to a buyer who tore it down and used it for lumber.



View from above the lighthouse at the Lighthouse Viewpoint.



Heceta Head Lighthouse State Scenic Viewpoint



Visitors ascend steps to top of lighthouse tower.



The Light

It has been on for more than a century. The U.S. Lighthouse Service lit the wick of the original coal oil (kerosene) lamp on March 30, 1894. That light, produced by five concentric wicks and magnified by a 392-prism British-made Fresnel lens, equaled 80,000 candle power. Its visibility—21 miles from shore—was limited only by the curvature of the earth.

The original clockworks that rotated the lamp consisted of a 35-foot cable attached to a 200-pound weight that dropped through the middle of the tower to a weight room. A lightkeeper hand cranked the weight every four hours.

Electrical power arrived in 1934, and a bulb replaced the oil lamp. The light now uses a 1,000-watt quartz bulb that produces 2.5 million candle power to emit one flash every 10 seconds.

In 1963, the light became fully automated. It was transferred from the U.S. Coast Guard to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department in 2001.

The Lightkeepers

Keeping the light flashing once every minute from sunset to sunrise was no easy task. The lightkeepers had to manually wind the clock. To keep the wicks burning, they had to haul coal oil from the fuel houses up the tower. Then there was always soot on the lens of the lamp to clean off.

The lightkeepers and their families lived and worked in an isolated environment. Until the coast highway was extended to Heceta Head in 1932, trips over wagon trails and the ocean beach to Florence took five to seven hours.

The arrival of electricity in the 1930s reduced the need for lightkeepers. In 1963, automation eliminated the need.

The Trail

It winds along both sides of Heceta Head. From the south side, the lighthouse is only a ½-mile walk from the parking lot (elevation gain 150 feet). The trail passes the bed and breakfast inn on a gentle slope up to the lighthouse and its spectacular cliffside viewing area.



A two-mile segment of the Oregon Coast Trail poses a more challenging route for hikers on the north side of the head. It follows a steep, winding path (elevation gain 600 feet). Your ocean views? Spectacular!

The trails connect Heceta Head State Scenic Viewpoint with Carl G. Washburne State Park north of the head. Washburne State Park includes a campground with 56 full hookup sites, seven walk-in tent sites and two yurts as well as trails to the beach. The campground is open all year.

The Beach

Natural caves. Tide pools. Plenty of sand for sandcastles. Even good surfing. It's all there on the beach stretching south from the foot of the head. A summertime naturalist helps beachcombers explore life on the beach and on the side of the head and its rocks offshore. Call 541-547-3416 for information on naturalist programs and group tours.

