

Visitors Guide



South Cape May Meadows

Sunset Blvd., Cape May, NJ 08204



Preserve Map



General Information

Hours

Dawn to Dusk

Busy Times

May, August and October are the busiest months. Year-round, weekend days are the busiest days. The busiest times are typically 8:00 AM – 2:00 PM. Holiday weekends are very busy.



Service Information

Cell Service- Most of the preserve has service. Areas near the beach may be spotty.
Number to call for emergency- 911
Lower Township Police Department non-emergency line- (609) 886-2711
The Nature Conservancy Office- (908) 879-7262

Group Information

Large groups are welcome, there is no group size limitation.

Preserve Users

- Birders/Naturalists
- Tour groups
- Photographers
- Volunteers
- Joggers/Runners
- Families



American oystercatchers

Preserve Rules

- Dogs are not permitted on this preserve. Service animals specifically trained to aid a person with a disability are welcome year-round. Handler must keep control of service animal at all times and abide by preserve rules. The ADA service animal definition does not include emotional support or comfort animals.
- Bikes and drones are not permitted on this preserve.
- Please carry out all garbage.
- Please stay on marked trails.
- Swimming and fishing are not permitted.
- Beach use is limited to nature viewing only from March 15 – August 31. Stopping, standing or sitting on the beach, even when viewing or photographing nature, can be disruptive to nesting and feeding birds. All beach visitors are asked to keep moving and stay outside of the roped-off nesting area.

Getting There



Address

Sunset Boulevard,
Cape May, NJ 08204

Biking Information

There is a bike rack in the parking lot.
There is room for roughly 10 bikes.
Please note the trails at this preserve
are not bike friendly.



Bike rack near the main entrance.

Parking Information

Parking Fee- No

Entrance Gate- No

Lot Surface Type- Paved in area closest to entrance; remainder gravel

Number of Spaces- 37 for standard cars

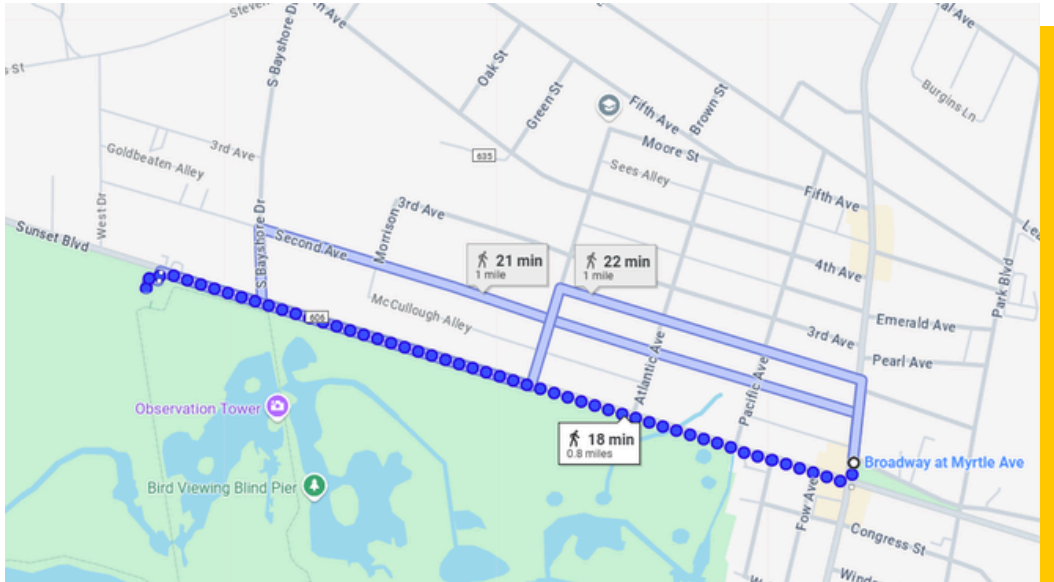
Accessible Parking- 3 reserved and paved ADA spaces with ramp aisles

Van Access- Yes

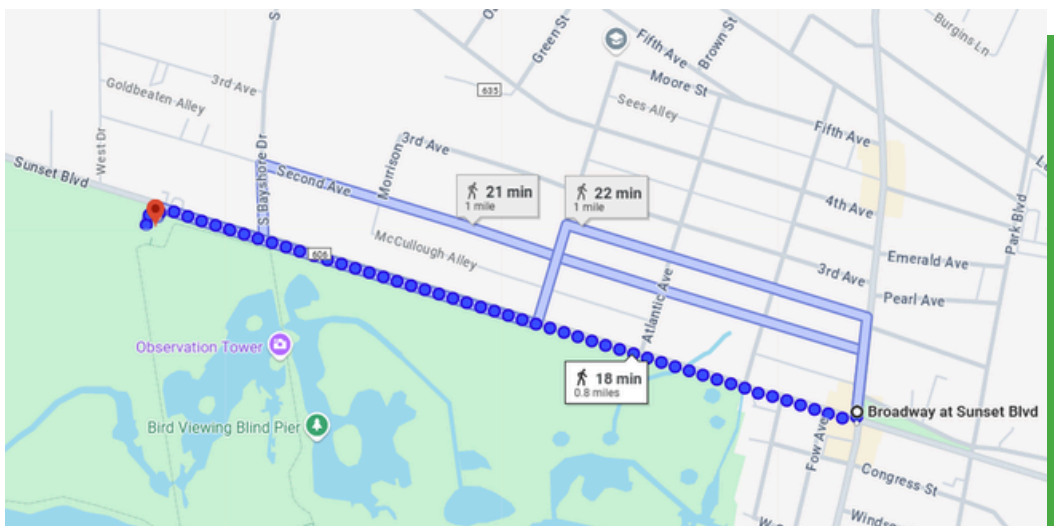


Public Transportation

There is no public transportation directly near this preserve; the closest bus is NJ Transit 522.



If you are coming from Cape May (heading north), get off at the Broadway and Myrtle Ave. stop. Head south on Broadway towards the traffic light. At the traffic light, turn right onto Sunset Blvd. and continue on this road for 0.8 miles. You will see the entrance for the preserve just past South Bayshore Dr.



If you are coming from Atlantic City/Wildwood (heading south), get off at the Broadway and Sunset Blvd. stop. Head west down Sunset Blvd. for 0.8 miles. You will see the entrance for the preserve just past South Bayshore Dr.

Amenities

Welcome Shed- A small, seasonally-staffed welcome shed greets guests with announcements, bird sightings and a digital kiosk featuring information about the preserve and a downloadable trail map. A rain garden to the right of the shed offers a bench for resting.

Trail Maps- Three trail maps at the preserve help orient visitors. The main entrance structure displays a printed map. An interactive digital trail map at the welcome shed can be viewed on the electronic kiosk screen or downloaded to a smartphone by scanning a QR code on the facade of the unit. A third preserve map is located on the State Park Connection Trail near the Boardwalk Trail access point. Downloadable trail maps are also available on the [preserve's website](#).

Restrooms- An ADA-compliant portable toilet is located at the start of the main trail. To access it from the preserve entrance, head towards the Main Trail. Instead of turning left to enter the preserve, turn right and proceed about 300 feet. The portable toilet is on the left side of the trail.

Water Fountains- A fountain and bottle refill station is situated near the welcome shed.

Trash Cans- Not provided--please carry out all garbage and dispose responsibly.

Staff- Seasonal TNC staff are onsite from March–October.



Charging Center- Revive your small electronics using the sun at the solar charging station with six USB ports near the welcome shed. Visitors must supply their own charging cords.

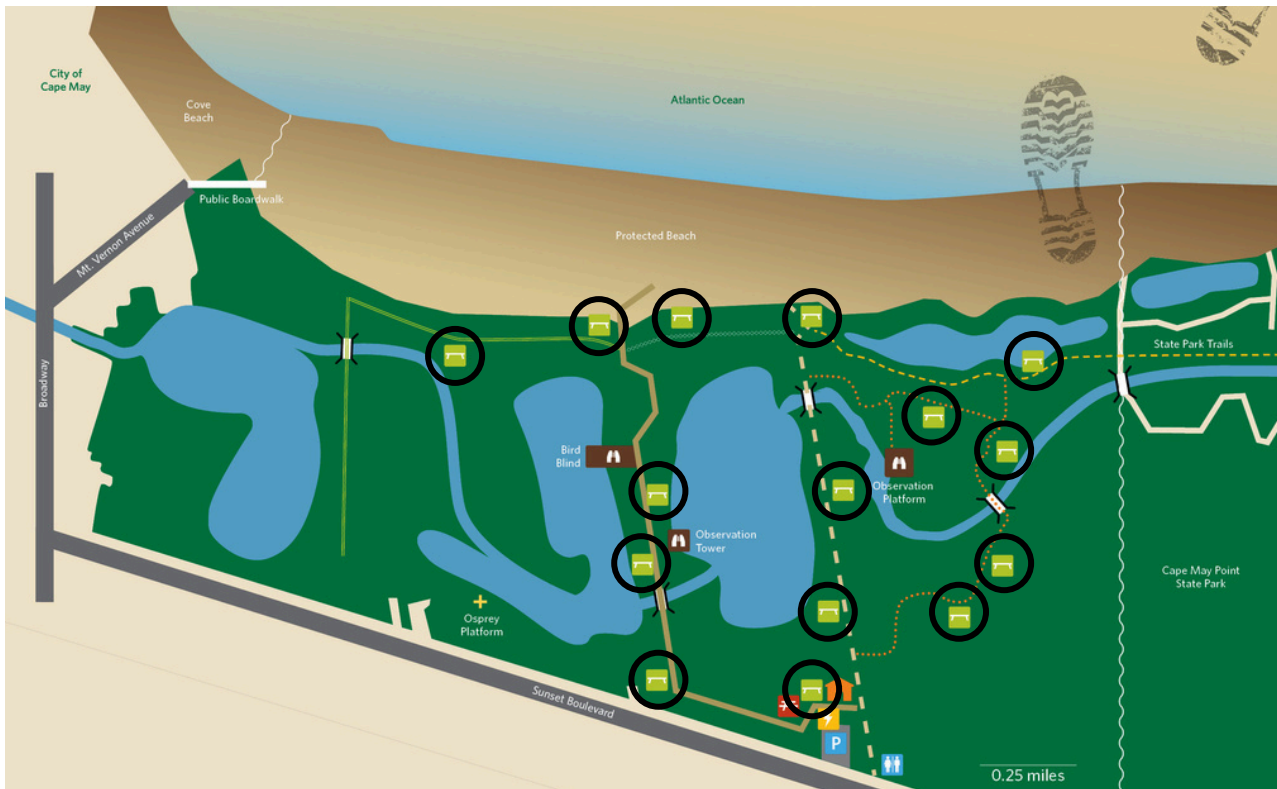
Bird Blind- On the East Trail, an 80-foot floating bird blind provides great views of wildlife. It is 81 inches wide, and has a small entrance ramp that is 71 inches wide.

Observation Tower- A large observation tower along the East Trail has a viewing scope for visitors to enjoy. Requires climbing 18 steps.

Osprey Platform- An osprey platform, live-streamed seasonally on our [YouTube channel](#), is visible from the East Trail, just beyond the small bridge on the path.

Sign Translations- Translations of interpretive signs for this preserve in [Spanish](#), [Simple Chinese](#), and [French \(Quebec dialect\)](#) can be downloaded ahead of time from the preserve's website under the resources tab, or accessed instantly via QR code and smartphone on the preserve.





Audio Tour- A free self-guided audio tour is available in English and Spanish; it can be downloaded in advance of your visit using the VoiceMap App. The first stop of the tour is located near the digital kiosk.

Benches- Fifteen benches/seating areas provide resting areas at the preserve; they are circled in black on the trail map.

Picnic tables- An accessible picnic area with three wheelchair or stroller accessible picnic tables is located near the parking lot.

Shade Information

The preserve's habitats including the Main, East and State Park Connection trails are fully exposed in the sun. Areas of shade or semi-shade include at the benches next to the welcome shed and along the Dune Connection trails, under the picnic pavilion, in the bird blind and along portions of the Boardwalk Trail.



Water fountain located near the visitor center.

Welcome Shed

A seasonally-staffed shed welcomes visitors at the preserve's main entrance. From this point, guests can turn right to access the Main Trail, turn left to access the East Trail or enjoy the amenities the welcome area has to offer. Larger-than-life bird foot tracks encourage guests to interact with the preserve's digital kiosk. Just to the right, a shaded bench overlooking a rain garden provides tranquility and a place to rest.



Entrance to the preserve's trail network.



Monarch caterpillar in rain garden.



Solar powered charging station.



Donor wall and native flower beds.



Seating area near purple martin houses.

The welcome area features several benches, a donor wall with native flowers, a solar-powered device charging station and bird houses for purple martins.

Trail Profiles

Main Trail



Color on map- dashed tan squares

Length- 0.4 miles

Surface type- hard compact sand and rock, or crushed stone.

Average trail width- 63 inches

Minimum trail width- 36 inches at the bridge crossing.

Average trail slope- 1.8%

Maximum trail slope- 12.8% near the dune crossing.

Benches- The trail's three benches are circled in black.

Flooding/Erosion- After heavy rain, portions of the trail--especially near the small bridge--may develop large puddles.

Navigation Notes- The small bridge on this trail has ADA-compliant ramps on both sides, each 5 ft. long and 36 in. wide, with a grade of 8.33%. The bridge (circled in yellow) also has handrails on both sides.

Trail Features- In addition to three benches and a small bridge, this trail near the dune crossing provides views of the Cape May Lighthouse, the Atlantic Ocean and TNC's beach-nesting bird enclosure, which supports fragile shorebirds like piping plovers and least terns.

Main Trail

From mid-late July roughly through September, thousands of swamp rose mallow flowers bloom at the preserve. Most visible from the Main Trail and the Boardwalk Trail, they make a beautiful photo opp!

Swamp rose mallow blooms.



Dune crossing entrance.



View of the beach nesting bird enclosure.



Bridge with ADA-ramps.



Box turtle on the Main Trail.

Boardwalk Trail



Color on map- dotted orange
Length- 0.6 miles
Surface type- plastic boardwalk
Average trail width- 60 inches

Minimum trail width- 60 inches
Average trail slope- 1.2%
Maximum trail slope- 3.2%



Bridge on the Boardwalk Trail.

Benches- The trail has four seating areas (circled in black), each containing three to four benches with 30 by 48 inches of clearance space to accommodate strollers and wheelchairs. The observation platform provides additional resting opportunities, with seven benches available for visitors.

Obstacles- N/A

Navigation Notes- The aluminum handrail occasionally causes mild static shocks during the winter months. After rainfall, the boardwalk surface may be slippery.

Trail Features- Four pullout areas on the trail serve as rest stops, and a visually unobtrusive handrail on one side offers guidance to users who need it. Additional exciting accessibility features include interpretive braille/tactile signs, and a bird observatory and seating area.

Boardwalk Trail

The entrance for the Boardwalk Trail is located about 200 feet from the entrance on the along the Main Trail. A tactile trail map with braille, a free audio tour and interpretive sign translations in Spanish, French, and Simplified Chinese welcome all visitors.



Tactile map located at the entrance of the Boardwalk Trail.



One of four rest areas along the Boardwalk Trail.

Boardwalk Trail



Observation platform and seating area.



Braille and tactile interpretive signs.



The trail features a variety of bench styles.

The six-foot wide, flat boardwalk provides a stable surface and is navigable by assistance-providing devices like wheelchairs and strollers.

A sturdy railing lining the trail offers guidance to those who need it.



State Park Connection Trail



Color on map- dashed yellow
Length- 0.2 miles
Surface type- sand and grass
Average trail width- 76 inches

Minimum trail width- 72 inches
Average trail slope- 1.2%
Maximum trail slope- 5.7%



State Park Connection Trail.

Benches- The one bench on this trail is circled in black.

Obstacles- Several areas of the trail have patches of dune grass growing in the middle of the path. The grass is periodically trimmed. From March to May, harmless ground bees may dig burrows on portions of this trail.

Flooding/Erosion- N/A

Navigation Notes- N/A

Trail Features- The trail, which connects to the Cape May Point State Park's trail network, has one bench that overlooks a freshwater pond.

State Park Connection Trail



This out-and-back trail connects the South Cape May Meadows preserve to the Cape May Point State Park's trail network. The single bench on this trail overlooks a freshwater pond where visitors can spot waterfowl, shorebirds and other exciting wildlife.



Bench on the State Park Connection Trail.



Baby turtles are frequently spotted on this trail.



Waterfowl are active in the trail's freshwater pond.

Dune Connection Trail



Color on map- white crisscross
 Length- 0.15 miles
 Surface type- compact crushed stone
 Average trail width- 82 inches

Minimum trail width- 66 inches
 Average trail slope- 1.3%
 Maximum trail slope- 4.5%



Halloween pennant dragonfly.

Benches- There is one bench on this trail, circled in black.

Obstacles- After a heavy rain, portions of the trail will develop large puddles.

Flooding/Erosion- N/A

Navigation Notes- N/A

Trail Features- On this trail you will encounter one shaded bench.

Dune Connection Trail



During fall migration, tree swallows form massive swarms throughout the preserve.



Dune Connection Trail.



Shaded bench on the trail.

East Trail



Color on map- solid tan

Length- 0.50 miles

Surface type- compact crushed stone

Average trail width- 83 inches

Minimum trail width- 36 inches at the bridge crossing

Average trail slope- 1.9%

Maximum trail slope- 12.3%

Benches- This trail has five benches which are circled in black on the map.

Picnic Tables- The trail's semi-shaded picnic pavilion (circled in blue) has three picnic tables, all of which are ADA-compliant.

Obstacles- A small bridge (circled in yellow) on this trail has 5 ft. long and 36. in wide, ADA-compliant ramps with a grade of 8.33% on both ends. The bridge also has handrails on both sides.

Flooding/Erosion- After a heavy rain, portions of the trail, especially near the small bridge, will develop large puddles.

Navigation Notes- The picnic pavilion is open-air, without doors. There are 18 steps to get up to the observation platform. The entrance to the floating bird blind is 71 inches wide, and the inside of the bird blind is 79 feet long and 6 feet, 9 inches wide.

Trail Features- The trail has six benches, a picnic pavilion, an observation tower with viewing scopes (circled in red) and a floating bird blind (circled in orange).

East Trail

The East Trail starts at the main entrance of the preserve. At this trailhead, visitors can turn right to access the Main Trail, or turn left to stay on the East Trail. The large bird foot tracks lead guests to enjoy the preserve's digital kiosk.



The preserve's main trailhead. From here visitors can turn left to access the East Trail.

Along the East Trail near the parking lot, visitors can enjoy a shaded picnic area. It has three accessible picnic tables and two benches.



Trumpet creeper on the East Trail.



One of the trail's five benches.

East Trail



As you head south towards the beach, the East Trail intersects with the East Trail Spur and the Dune Connection Trail. You can continue straight over the dune crossing to access the beach, turn left to access the East Trail Spur or turn right to take the Dune Connection Trail.

Intersection with the East Trail Spur and Dune Connection Trail.



The East trail's observation tower.



View from the observation tower.



Floating bird blind.



East Trail dune crossing leading to beach.

East Trail Spur



Color on map- green thin lines
Length- 0.45 miles
Surface type- sand and grass
Average trail width- 22 inches

Minimum trail width- 14 inches
Average trail slope- 2.1%
Maximum trail slope- 8.6%



Blackberry bushes grow along many portions of this trail.

Benches- One bench (circled in black) is situated along this trail.

Obstacles- A small bridge (circled in blue) on this trail is 36 in. wide with a grade of 8.33%; it has handrails on both sides. Dune grasses and blackberry bushes may overhang onto the trails during the summer months.

Flooding/Erosion- N/A

Navigation Notes- This is an out and back trail, making the total length 0.90 miles round-trip.

Trail Features- The trail has one bench that overlooks a freshwater pond.

East Trail Spur



The East Trail Spur trailhead.



Bridge on the trail.



View from the bridge.



Snowy egret on the East Trail Spur bridge.



Photo Credits

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Page 2: Main Trail; Lily Mullock/TNC, American Oystercatchers; Alicia Calkins/TNC

Page 3: Bike Rack; Lily Mullock/TNC, Parking Lot; Erika Iouriev/TNC

Page 5: Greeting Shed; Lily Mullock/TNC

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Page 9: Flowers, Ramp and Turtle; Lily Mullock/TNC, Dune Crossing and Beach View; Erika Iouriev/TNC

Page 10: Bridge; Delaney Cluff/TNC

Page 11: Map; Lily Mullock/TNC, Boardwalk Trail; Damon Noe/TNC

Page 12: Interpretive Sign; Lily Mullock/TNC, Observation Platform, Bench Pull Off and People on Boardwalk; Damon Noe/TNC

Page 13: State Park Connection Trail; Erika Iouriev/TNC

Page 14: Trail Sign and Bench; Alicia Calkins/TNC, Turtle; Lily Mullock/TNC, Duck; Canva

Page 15: Halloween Pennant; Canva

Page 16: Tree Swallows; Trisha Seelman/TNC, Trail and Bench; Lily Mullock/TNC

Page 18: Greeting Shed; Lily Mullock/TNC, Picnic Structure and Bench; Erika Iouriev/TNC, Trumpet Creeper; Canva

Page 19: Trail Intersection, Observation Tower and Dune Crossing; Erika Iouriev/TNC, Observation Tower View and Bird Blind; Alicia Calkins/TNC

Page 20: Blackberries; Canva

Page 21: Trailhead, Bridge and View from Bridge; Alicia Calkins/TNC, Egret; Lily Mullock/TNC

Page 22: Birding; TNC