



## Lighthouse Tours

June-September: daily, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.

March-May and October:

Friday-Monday, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

November-February: weather permitting (call ahead: 541-347-3416)

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

*Allow 45 minutes for a tour. When the park is busy (usually June through August), there can be a wait.*

## Parking

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

- a State Parks daily, 12-month, or 24-month parking permit;
- a State Parks camping receipt, which counts as a permit for the days you are registered at a State Park campground;
- an Oregon Pacific Coast Passport (five-day or 12-month) good at some federal recreation sites as well as selected State Parks.

You can purchase a daily parking permit at the parking area ticket machine. Permits are also sold by merchants in the vicinity, at major State Park offices, and via the Info Center (800-551-6949).

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



Printed on Recycled Paper

This brochure is available in alternative formats on request. Write to OPRD, 725 Summer St. NE, Suite C, Salem, OR 97301 or call 1-800-551-6949 (Oregon Relay for the hearing impaired: dial 7-1-1).

63400-8234 (12/17)



# Heceta Head Lighthouse

## State Scenic Viewpoint



off US 101 12 miles north of Florence

The iconic lighthouse at Heceta Head keeps a steadfast watch from its perch 206 feet above the Pacific. Its light has guided mariners for more than a century, while its picturesque white tower draws visitors to the surrounding 549-acre park with its trails, tide pools, and sandy beach.

## Early History

The headland was named for Don Bruno de Heceta, who surveyed the Oregon coast for the Royal Spanish Navy in 1775. He was the first European to record the promontory rising 1,000 feet above the water. Native Americans living in nearby coastal areas used Heceta Head for hunting and fishing through the 19th century. In 1888, white homesteaders claimed 164 acres of the headland; the same year, the U.S. Lighthouse Board approved plans to build a light station at Heceta to illuminate a dark spot on the Oregon coast.

## The Light Station

Construction of the lighthouse began in 1892. Building materials were unloaded from ships and rowed to shore or transported via horse-drawn wagon from Florence and then carted up the hill. Stone for the lighthouse came from the Clackamas River; the bricks came from San Francisco. The finished complex consisted of the 56-foot-high lighthouse; housing for the head lightkeeper, two assistant lightkeepers, and their families; a barn; and two kerosene oil houses.



Heceta Head circa 1911 (courtesy Siuslaw Pioneer Museum)

The U.S. Lighthouse Service first lit the five-wick kerosene lamp on March 30, 1894. The light, amplified by a 392-prism, first-order Fresnel lens, equaled 80,000 candle power. Today, Heceta has the only active British-made Chance Brothers lens of its kind in the U.S., and it is the brightest beacon on the Oregon coast. Its modern 1,000-watt quartz bulb produces 2.5 million candle power; the visibility of the beam is limited only by the curvature of the earth. It emits one flash every 10 seconds.

Of the original structures, the lighthouse, the assistant lightkeeper's house, and the oil houses still remain. The lighthouse and keeper's house were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978. The lighthouse was transferred from the U.S. Coast Guard to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department in 2001; the assistant lightkeeper's house is now a bed and breakfast run by a concessionaire of the U.S. Forest Service.





## Heceta Head Lighthouse State Scenic Viewpoint



(courtesy YourDigitalArt.us)

## Life as a Keeper of the Light



Lightkeeper Frank DeRoy, circa 1902 (courtesy U.S. Forest Service)

The lightkeepers at Heceta Head worked in shifts to keep the light burning from sunset to sunrise. The clockworks that rotated the lamp consisted of a cable attached to a 200-pound weight that dropped through the middle of the tower; the lightkeepers had to hand-crank the weight once every two and a half hours through the night. They also had to replenish the lamp's fuel reservoir by

hauling kerosene from the oil houses to the top of the tower and polish soot off the lens so that the light shone clearly. When not in the tower, the keepers would pass the time by reading in the workroom downstairs by a woodstove.

The arrival of electricity in 1934 replaced the oil lamp with a bulb and reduced the need for lightkeepers. In 1963, the lighthouse was fully automated.

## Restoration

In 2011, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department began a major effort to restore the lighthouse. Years of sea spray, storm winds, and disuse had taken their toll on the beloved landmark. Funded by a federal transportation enhancement grant, the project was a top-to-bottom restoration.

One of the preservation tasks was to remove cement stucco that had sealed in water so the lighthouse could "breathe" and air out in the damp coastal environment. The historic metalwork and masonry were restored or replaced, the interior and exterior were repainted, new windows and a new vent ball (the round knob on top of the lighthouse) were installed, and the interior bricks were cleaned. In addition, the original wood floor of the workroom was uncovered and reconditioned. The project took nearly two years to complete; the lighthouse you see today looks much as it would have in 1894.

## Exploring Heceta Head

Trails run both north and south of the lighthouse. On the south side, a gently-sloping ½-mile trail takes you from the parking lot past the assistant lightkeeper's house (now a bed and breakfast). You will gain 150 feet in elevation before ending up at the lighthouse and its cliffside viewpoint.

A two-mile segment of the Oregon Coast Trail poses a more challenging route on the north side of the lighthouse. This steep, winding path has an elevation gain of 600 feet and offers spectacular outlooks from two different viewpoints before descending to the beach via the Hobbit Trail.

Heceta Head State Scenic Viewpoint also offers caves, tide pools, and a sandy beach stretching south from the foot of the head. Call 541-547-3416 for information on summertime naturalist programs and group tours.

## Wildlife Viewing

The rocky bluffs and sea stacks of the headland are part of the Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge. They are a home for many nesting seabirds like the common murre. Seals and sea lions sometimes also "haul out" on the rocks to rest and give birth. Spring and early summer are the best times to spot birds as well as migrating gray whales.

