



Nature
HISTORY
Discovery

Port Orford Heads State Park

and Lifeboat Station

Year-round camping nearby:

Cape Blanco State Park, 9 miles north of Port Orford, has 53 campsites with electrical and water hookups (first-come, first served) and four cabins (cabins reservable by calling 1-800-452-5687).

Humbug Mountain State park, 6 miles south of Port Orford, has 33 sites with electrical and water hookups and 68 tent sites (all first-come, first-served).



Port Orford Lifeboat Station Museum and Interpretive Center, Port Orford Heads State Park

Open April 1-October 31
Thursday-Monday, 10 a.m.- 3:30 p.m.

For more information, visit:
<http://www.portorfordlifeboatstation.org>
or <http://www.oregonstateparks.org>

Phone: 541-332-0521

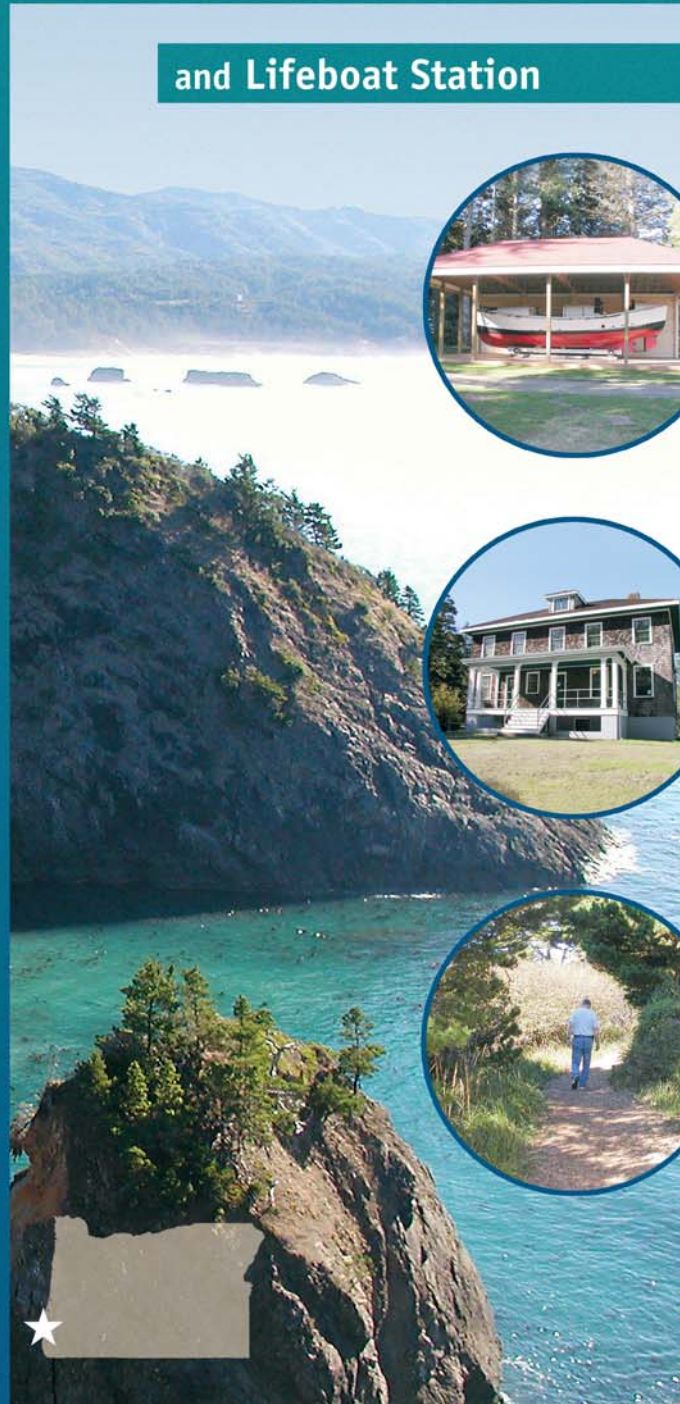


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The Port Orford Lifeboat Station Museum is operated through a cooperative agreement between the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and the Point Orford Heritage Society.

This publication is available in alternative formats on request.
Write to: OPRD, 725 Summer St. NE, Suite C, Salem, OR 97301-1271;
or call 503-986-0707 (for the hearing impaired 1-800-735-2900).

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So beautiful to view . . .

Some of the most dramatically pleasing sights on the Oregon coast are visible from the trails at Port Orford Heads State Park. Here you can see the Pacific Ocean splashing against miles of southern Oregon coastline. Vistas extend north toward the Cape Blanco Lighthouse and south to Port Orford and Humbug Mountain, and beyond.



. . . so perilous to navigate

On a stormy day, when ocean waves are battering the shoreline, it is easy to see why Port Orford Heads was the site of one of the first lifeboat stations on the Oregon coast. From 1934 to 1970, U.S. Coast Guard surfmen, as they were called, kept watch over a 40-mile stretch of coastline between Cape Blanco and Cape Sebastian. Stationed atop a 37-foot-high lookout tower perched near the westernmost tip of the head, they watched for distress signals from out at sea, ever ready to launch search and rescue missions from their boathouse in Nellies Cove, 280 feet below.

The Port Orford Lifeboat Station: past and present

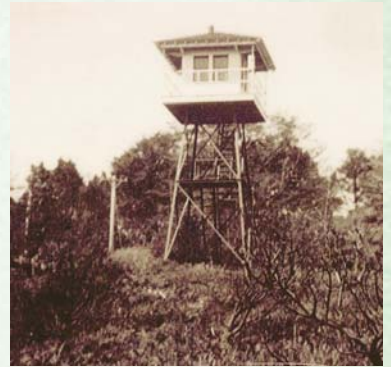
Frequent shipwrecks on the south Oregon coast in the late 1800s and early 1900s prompted the U.S. Coast Guard to select Port Orford Heads as the site of a lifesaving station. Besides the observation tower and boathouse, the compound included an Officer-in-Charge residence and a two-story building housing an office and quarters for the crew. A steep stairway with more than 500 steps connected the Crew Quarters with a boathouse.

Today, the Crew Quarters structure is the Port Orford Lifeboat Station museum. The building is on the National Register of Historic Places, as are four other surviving neocolonial structures: a storage building, a pumphouse, a garage and the Officer-in-Charge quarters, which now serves as a residence for park staff.

Take time to inspect the station's legendary, unsinkable 36-foot motor lifeboat. Inside the museum, you can see the crew's Lyle gun once used to shoot rescue lines to ships in distress. Historical artifacts and interpretive accounts of the station's history help make the past come alive.



The Lifeboat Station.



Coast Guard observation tower, 1934-1970.



Officer-in-Charge quarters.



Aerial view of boathouse in Nellies Cove.

Remnants seen from the trails

The park's main trails—the Cove, Tower and Headland trails—begin at the museum. From a viewpoint on the Cove Trail, watch for remnants of the stairway to Nellies Cove. The boathouse, which sheltered two 36-foot motor lifeboats, burned down in the late 1970s. You can still see its pilings and breakwater structures as well as portions of a rail-mounted carriage used to launch the boats into the cove.



View north to Cape Blanco

Wartime watch

During World War II, lookouts in the Port Orford Lifeboat Station tower did more than watch for emergency signals from foundering ships. The station's complement grew from 13 to more than 100 Coast Guardsmen who stayed alert around the clock watching for enemy aircraft, ships and submarines. Wartime additions to the compound included a guardhouse, sentries, guard dogs, machine gun pits and foxholes.

In the museum, read about the 1942 Japanese submarine attacks off the south Oregon coast. You can also have an authentic GI 'dog tag' made on a vintage machine.

The Tower Trail leads to the historical location of the observation tower, which was removed when the station was decommissioned in 1970.



View south from Nellies Cove.

