

Odiorne Point State Park

Rye, NH

Trail Closures Notice

Trail closures are in place where erosion, flooding, and changing coastal conditions have damaged trail systems and impacted sensitive coastal resources. In some areas, former upland trails now pass through salt marsh habitat. Closing these areas helps protect coastal ecosystems and supports long-term restoration to strengthen the resilience of the park and its trails.

Please note: High tide may limit access along the full length of the Blue Trail.



Frost Point

Little Harbor

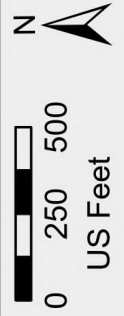
Beach dune restoration

Salt marsh restoration

Bike Path

Legend

- | | |
|---------------|----------------------|
| Trails | Trail Closure |
| -- No color | P Parking |
| Blue | Tollbooth |
| Green | Boat Launch |
| Orange | Restroom |
| Purple | Playground |
| Red | Observation Platform |
| White | Roads |
| Yellow | Wetland |



Atlantic Ocean

Seacoast Science Center

Main Entrance

Bike Path

Columbus Road

Fairhill Saltmarsh

Odiorne Point State Park

History

The history of Odiorne Point State Park begins pre-European settlement, when during summer migrations, Native Americans of Pennacook and Abenaki tribes visited the area, which they called Pannaway. Permanent settlement began in the 1600s. In 1623, an agent of England's Council for New England came to fish and trade in the New World. David Thomson journeyed to New England on the ship Jonathan to establish the first New Hampshire settlement at what would become Odiorne Point. Many others followed, and the original settlement grew and spread along the coast and up the river.

John Odiorne joined the settlement in 1660. He acquired several acres of land from the shoreline west into the marshes beyond. Like the others, he farmed and fished. The Odiornes remained on the property for several generations, always a part of the continuing changes in the Odiorne Point community.

By the 1700s the settlement was well established, but the governing and trading activities had moved north into the deep harbor area of Strawberry Banke (now Portsmouth). The farms of Odiorne Point helped to feed the burgeoning port of Portsmouth for about 150 years.

After the Civil War, farming gradually gave way to a colony of hotels and large summer homes. Generations of families spent their summers by the sea. In this era of large seaside resorts, a grand hotel called the Sagamore House was built on the property. Over the years, smaller parcels of land were sold for summer homes and estates. Formal gardens and tree-lined drives ornamented the properties. By the late 1930s, seventeen families lived on Odiorne Point, including an eighth generation descendent of John Odiorne and the last of the Odiornes to live on the ancestral homestead.

World War II brought drastic changes to the landscape and to the lives of these people who loved their land by the sea. In 1942, the federal government purchased all property from Little Harbor to the Sunken Forest, as well as the adjacent marshland. Within a month, the Odiornes and their neighbors were gone.

Military structures were quickly built to house personnel, armaments and supplies. Massive concrete casements, often called bunkers, were constructed and camouflaged with thick vegetation. Because of their open aspect to the sea, many of the estates were demolished, and Route 1A was closed. Odiorne Point became known as Fort Dearborn, and for nearly 20 years, was part of the chain of coastal defenses that protected Portsmouth Harbor and the Naval Shipyard. In the late 1950s, Fort Dearborn was declared surplus property. It was sold to the state of New Hampshire in 1961. The Division of Parks and Recreation maintains oceanfront picnic spots, some accessible, miles of walking trails, a paved bicycle path and boat launch.

The park offers an extensive array of habitats. On the south end of the park, sheltered tidepools of the Sunken Forest give way to an exposed rocky shore. Just north, the shore evolves into a pebble beach which shelters a freshwater marsh. Along the way to Frost Point, where a jetty extends into Little Harbor, lies a small sand dune environment. At the end of Little Harbor, Seavey Creek feeds the neighboring saltmarsh.

Extensive inland disturbances during World War II induced the growth of dense shrub forests in various stages of succession. Large stone walls bound open fields. Fresh water systems are represented within the park by a man-made pond and marsh. Remnants of formal gardens and wildflowers grow side by side; and the man-made military bunkers lie hidden under mounds of earth.

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