



News Release

Cape May County, New Jersey

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The hidden gems of Cape May County

Cape May diamonds, those tiny pieces of polished quartz prized by residents and visitors alike, aren't the only gems in Cape May County. From the northwestern corner of the county to the tip of New Jersey in Cape May Point, there are wonderful surprises tucked away, waiting to be uncovered and enjoyed. From wildlife refuges and bike paths for outdoor enthusiasts, to buildings and cemeteries that date back centuries for history buffs or just interesting, out of the way places for everyone to enjoy, Cape May County is ready to display its hidden gems.

More than a hundred years ago, a group of Jewish immigrants settled in Woodbine, a farming community far removed from the beaches and barrier islands that were attracting visitors from Philadelphia to enjoy a seaside holiday. Today, the history of those proud, resourceful people who first called Woodbine their home is preserved in the Sam Azeez Museum of Woodbine Heritage, headquartered in the very synagogue that those early residents built themselves.

The Brotherhood Synagogue, now on the National Register of Historic Places, houses a wealth of history, photographs and oral histories that document more than a century of the borough's history. Sam Azeez grew up in this northern Cape May County community and is himself a hidden gem – he was one of the pioneers of the technology for internet and cellular telephone communications.

The museum is located at 610 Washington Avenue. Call 609-861-5355 for specific hours or visit www.thesam.org

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Know what a mibster is? Stop at the National Marbles Hall of Fame in the George Boyer Museum in Wildwood and learn about the marbles championships that have been played on the beach at Ringer Stadium for decades with a girl and boy champ crowned every June.

Bike paths crisscross the county, sometimes as specific routes like the Cold Spring Bike Path that starts just north of the Cape May Canal and ends around Sally Marshall Crossing just south of Rio Grande. The path parallels Bradner's Run Nature Trail near Historic Cold Spring Village and cyclists often see interesting plants, animals, insects and migratory birds.

Other bike paths link Wildwood Crest with the Boardwalk through Wildwood into North Wildwood; in Middle Township bike paths connect with the County Zoo. Woodbine has great bike paths and other communities have clearly marked bike lanes on local roadways that make biking a safe and fun pastime. Psst – there are no hills (except maybe a few bridges here and there) – a real bonus for everyone, especially novice bike riders, pedaling around the county.

The Cameron Wildlife Sanctuary in the northern part of the county is 25 acres of pinelands woods, salt marsh and freshwater ponds – very difficult to find in one location anywhere. In season, look for lily pads, wild cranberries, chicken grapes, blueberries, huckleberries and beach plums in addition to painted turtles, otters, opossums, rabbits, raccoons and foxes.

The Lester G. MacNamara Wildlife Management Area provides diversified habitats that attract birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians; an eagle observation tower helps visitors spot eagles, usually in the summer through fall. Other wildlife management areas around the county provide great opportunities to watch migrating birds, see wild orchids at Bennett's Bog and thoroughly enjoy Mother Nature, one of the county's most valuable natural assets.

Make a day of it at Belleplain State Forest, thousands of acres of natural wooded forest with deer, rabbit, fox, other mammals and reptiles with areas for camping, hiking and hunting along with a freshwater lake for swimming and recreational use.

The Colonial House in Cape May, a very small and certainly modest structure compared to her ornate Victorian relatives around town, was built before the Revolutionary War and quite likely was a tavern when the area was still called Cape Island. Located at 653 ½ Washington Street, the Colonial House is open to the public and helps preserve the county's colonial heritage.

Check out an interesting looking concrete bunker constructed on the Cape May Point beach during World War II to protect the Delaware Bay from invasion. Unfortunately, erosion has taken its toll on the bunker and it can only be viewed from the beach. Two interesting-looking

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towers – one near Cape May Point and another in North Wildwood, were lookout posts during the war and will be restored and open to the public in the near future.

Even more historic is the Quaker meeting house on Route 9 in Seaville, a modest structure, erected in the early 1700s, and used for services for many, many years. Old Brick, a Presbyterian Church in Lower Township, is another gem, built by whalers in 1823. Services are still held there and the historic graveyard holds one of the largest concentrations of Mayflower descendants outside of New England.

Maritime, military and domestic items from Cape May's colonial and Victorian history are on display in the Cape May County Historical Society, housed in the historic John Holmes House, built in 1755 on Route 9 in Cape May Court House.

The John Wesley Gandy Farmstead, c. 1815, sheltered and supported generations of farmers, mariners, shipbuilders, preachers and weavers from more than a century. Located at 26 Tyler Road in Greenfield, the house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In Palermo at 859 South Shore Road, the Friendship School, built around 1831 and probably in use until about 1865, has been reconstructed. Both buildings are open from 1 to 4 p.m. the first Sunday of April, May, October and November. For more information call 609-390-5656.

Think the shore is only for the summer? Wrong again! Of course, June, July and August are prime time with even May and September thrown in for good measure. Drive around Cape May County in late October when the foliage rivals New England and the Apple Fest in Upper Township entices visitors with pies, crafts and even an appearance by Johnny Appleseed. Or, plan a get-away weekend in December to enjoy a month long celebration of the holidays, especially in Cape May. January or February and even March are quiet months for relaxing in front of a fire, walking on a deserted beach or just relishing a few blissful hours with absolutely nothing to do and nowhere to go!

For more information about these hidden gems and other great places in Cape May County, contact the Cape May County Department of Tourism at 800-227-2297 or www.thejerseycape.com.