

Sample Pigeon Point Light Station Walking Tour

Each new Pigeon Point docent will have an opportunity to observe walking tours and interpretation by experienced docents and, with help from a docent/mentor, to develop their own tour. The outline of a sample tour below is intended to help in this process.

While all tours will cover the broad topic of Pigeon Point Light Station, you are free to concentrate on narrower topics that might interest you, for example local social history, California maritime history, lives of the keepers and their families, lighthouse technology, local natural history, etc. Each presentation should also have a specific theme or message—the main idea you want visitors to walk away with that says something about your topic.

The sample guided tour below provides a guideline for your use, but you should make your presentation your own, with elements that interest you. If it interests you, your enthusiasm will be apparent and chances are it will also interest your audience.

Make the connection between what you are saying and what the visitors are seeing/feeling/etc. For example, use the pictures on the Fresnel lens sign in discussing the lens. Similarly, on a foggy day, ask visitors to imagine how easily, before there was a lighthouse, ships' crews could have become disoriented and run ashore on the rocks. This technique makes the facts appear more relevant and helps the visitor remember them.

No matter how nervous or unsure you feel, you probably know more than your audience. After all, they're here because they want to learn more about the lighthouse. If there is a knowledgeable lighthouse buff in the crowd, use him or her to add more color to your talk. Don't try to tell visitors everything you know; select a few key ideas or facts at each stop. (You may want to use a note card for each stop to remind you.)

Before leaving each stop, ask for questions. If no one has any, maybe you can ask a question to get people thinking. The handout, "Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) at the Pigeon Point Light Station," is a good resource to find answers to questions. If you don't know the answer to a question, note it and try to find the answer after the tour.

Relax and have fun!

Sample Tour

Why Are There No Pigeons at Pigeon Point?

Theme: Why is this lighthouse here and what was it like to be a keeper and operate it?

Position One: Tour sign at entrance (or in front of bunker)

Focus: Staging, introduction, and overview

Introduce yourself with your name and why you volunteer here – SMILE! You're here to have fun!

Welcome everyone to Pigeon Point, asking questions about where they're from or their interest in lighthouses. This gets them involved and gives you a feel for any special interests or needs (age, language, mobility, etc.) to factor into your presentation.

Explain how the tour will work (including tower closure) and how long it will take (45 min.) then stick to it.

Position Two: Past picnic tables overlooking cove (inside picket fence)

Focus: Early history, whalers, gold rush, *Carrier Pigeon* and other wrecks—demonstrating why there was a need for a lighthouse at Pigeon Point (any questions?)

- ◆ 1846 - 1850...76 total vessels into ALL ports in California
- ◆ 1849...California gold rush – suddenly over 100 vessels arrived in one year into San Francisco harbors
- ◆ 1853...Wreck of clipper ship *Carrier Pigeon* ... Briefly explain how Pigeon Point was named and that the point used to be called Punta de las Balenas (Whale Point).
- ◆ 1865...Sir John Franklin wrecks, 13 of 18 crew drowned
- ◆ Wrecks of the *Coya* (1866) and *Hellespont* (1868), more lives lost
- ◆ Point out that Colombia Bay is named after the passenger liner *Colombia*, which ran aground there in 1896, even after lighthouse present

Position Three: Knoll south of bunker

Focus: Establishment of the lighthouse, construction, technical details—the height of the tower, number of bricks, etc., (any questions?)

- ◆ 115 ft tall, on a 35 ft bluff = 150 ft above sea level
- ◆ 136 wrought-iron steps inside, 149 total steps
- ◆ Half million bricks, made locally
- ◆ Grandfather clock mechanism
- ◆ 17-18 miles on a clear night

- ◆ 1870... Federal Govt (US Lighthouse Board) buys Año Nuevo Island and Pigeon Point from Loren Coburn for \$10K
- ◆ 1871...Congress approves \$90K and fog horn and dwelling completed
- ◆ 1872...Tower completed, lamp lit at sunset on November 15th

Position Four: Fresnel lens sign in front of bunker

Focus: Lighthouse technology and how it evolved over time (any questions?)

- ◆ Early lighthouse technology
- ◆ Pharos in Alexandria (2,300 years ago)—tower with a fire on top
- ◆ Hyperbolic mirrors and oil lamps (like a Christmas tree of hurricane lamps)

- ◆ 1760...Boston Harbor 1st lighthouse in our country
- ◆ 1822...Fresnel lens developed—use the sign to show how lens works

- ◆ Original fuel...lard oil
- ◆ 1888...kerosene/bunker
- ◆ 1926...electricity
- ◆ 1972...automated

Position Five: Observation Deck

Focus: Fog signal, damage/restoration, marine life (any questions?)

- ◆ Show damage to tower; explain what caused it
- ◆ Explain fog horn and why it was needed in addition to the light
- ◆ Talk up nearby nature—whales, birds, seals

Position Six: In front of Fog Signal Building

Focus: Keepers quarters, daily life (any questions?), closing

- ◆ Original Victorian four-plex replaced in 1960 with bungalows, now a hostel
- ◆ Head keeper and three assistant keepers—duties
- ◆ Family station—good assignment
- ◆ District Inspector's visits

- ◆ 1910...Lighthouse Service takes over from US Lighthouse Board
- ◆ 1939...Coast Guard took over
- ◆ 1976...fog horn deactivated
- ◆ 2001...closure of tower
- ◆ 2005...conveyance ceremony on May 25

Closing - Thank you, remind them of exhibits & video in Fog Signal Building, Keeper's Store, and photos in the bunker