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AN IN DEPTH TOWN GUIDE

Living in Island Heights, NJ

A short history, the sections of town, homes and taxes, where to shop and eat, things to do, and a moving checklist for your new home.



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This guide goes deeper than our website: the history, the sections of town, a moving checklist and worksheets for your visits. Keep it, mark it up, and call either of us with questions.

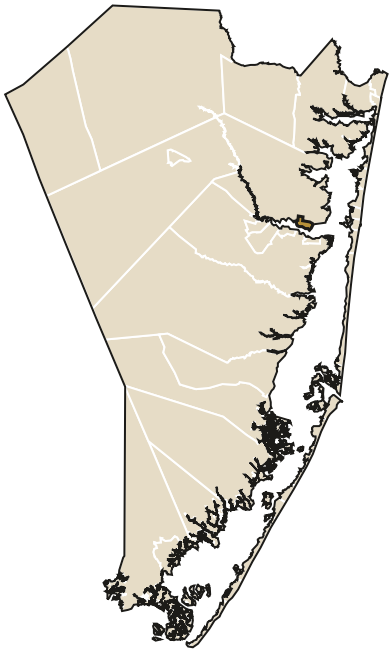
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AT A GLANCE

Island Heights at a glance

County	Ocean
Population	About 1,650 (2020 census)
Size	About 0.9 square miles, about 0.6 of it land
Setting	A bluff and riverfront on the Toms River, with a large historic district
Main roads	Route 37 along the north edge of town; Parkway Exit 82 via Route 37



Island Heights in gold, in Ocean County

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A SHORT HISTORY

The story of Island Heights

The Lenape knew the high bluffs on the south side of this island in the Toms River, and arrowheads and shell mounds have been found here. Granted to a Dr. Johnson in 1690, it was later called Dillon's Island after James Dillon, whose pre-Revolutionary house still stands on the east end. The land stayed mostly natural until 1878, when a Methodist group formed the Island Heights Association to build a camp meeting resort like Ocean Grove.

About 1,500 people came to the first camp meeting, and lots sold quickly. The Pennsylvania Railroad built a branch line in 1883, and Island Heights was incorporated as a borough on May 6, 1887, from part of Dover Township, now Toms River. In 1902 John Wanamaker built a summer camp for his store's young workers; the borough bought it in 1975, and it is now the municipal complex.

KEY DATES

Timeline

1878	The Island Heights Association is incorporated and holds its first camp meeting.
1883	The Pennsylvania Railroad builds a branch line to Island Heights.
1887	Island Heights is incorporated as a borough on May 6 from part of Dover Township.
1980	The Island Heights Historic District is added to the National Register of Historic Places.

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SECTIONS OF TOWN

On the bluff and along the river

The historic district on the bluff. Most of the borough, roughly bounded by Toms River, Summit and River Avenues, about 60 feet above the river. Victorian cottages from the camp meeting era and larger Queen Anne homes on shaded streets.

The riverfront. Streets below the bluff along the Toms River, with the borough boardwalk, the yacht club and boat basins. Some homes look straight out over the water.

Around Dillon's Creek. The north central part of town along the creek named for the Dillon family, with quieter residential streets.

The east end. The end of the island toward Barnegat Bay, where the old Dillon House stands, with homes near the water and the Long Point area.

> Island Heights became a borough in 1887, formed from what is now Toms River Township. It borders Toms River Township and Berkeley Township, and it uses the 08732 ZIP code. The name comes from its early days as an island, once called Doctor Johnson's Island and later Dillon's Island.

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HOMES AND TAXES

What you will find

Camp meeting era cottages: Cottages from the late 1800s, built after the town began as a summer camp meeting resort.

Queen Anne and Victorian homes: Larger historic homes, including landmarks like the Grenley House, known as the Gingerbread House.

River view homes: Homes on and near the bluff looking out over the Toms River.

Worth knowing: Island Heights asks buyers to check three things. The historic district covers most of the borough, so ask the borough what review applies before you plan exterior work. From the start, the camp meeting association put a clause prohibiting the use of liquor in every deed, and many deeds still carry it, so read the deed. And flood risk changes with the ground: a home up on the bluff and a home down by the river are different cases, so get the flood zone and the elevation certificate for each. New Jersey sellers must disclose the flood zone and flood history.

Property taxes

1.469%
2025 effective tax rate, as a share of market value

$9,402
2025 average residential tax bill

A home worth $650,000 on today's market would pay roughly $9,548 a year at Island Heights's 2025 effective rate. Your actual bill depends on your assessment, so we pull the real tax record for any home you are considering.

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GROCERIES, DINING AND SHOPPING

Where Island Heights shops and eats

Island Heights is almost all homes, with no supermarket in the borough, so groceries and most errands mean a short drive out to Route 37 in Toms River.

Grocery stores

NORTHWEST	**Stop & Shop** 353 Route 37 East, Toms River
NORTH	**ShopRite** 860 Fischer Boulevard, Toms River
NORTHWEST	**ShopRite** 2 Route 37 West, Toms River
EAST	**Acme** 5 Ortley Plaza, Toms River (Seaside Heights mailing address)

Checked October 2026. Stores open, close and move, so call ahead before a first trip.

Dining

Central Avenue. The town's small center, with a cafe or two and the library. Island Heights itself has very few places to eat.

Route 37 in Toms River. Just north of the borough line, the main corridor for restaurants and everyday shopping.

Downtown Toms River. A few minutes west, Washington Street and Main Street have a walkable mix of restaurants and cafes.

Seaside Heights: East on Route 37 across Barnegat Bay, a two mile boardwalk with amusement piers, arcades and a wide variety of food.

Shopping

Most everyday shopping is a few minutes away along Route 37 in Toms River, and the Ocean County Mall, the only enclosed mall in Ocean County, is on Hooper Avenue in Toms River.

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GETTING AROUND

Roads and commuting

Route 37 runs along the north edge of Island Heights. Head east and it crosses Barnegat Bay to Seaside Heights and Route 35; head west and it reaches Route 9 and Garden State Parkway Exit 82 in Toms River. There is no passenger rail. Most daily shopping is a few minutes away along Route 37 in Toms River.

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THINGS TO DO

Things to do in and around Island Heights

Island Heights Historic District. About 280 acres with 244 contributing buildings, added to the National Register in 1980. An easy walk past camp meeting cottages and Victorian homes.

John F. Peto Studio Museum. The home and studio of the still life painter at 102 Cedar Avenue, now a museum with a summer concert series and art camp for children.

The riverfront boardwalk. A boardwalk along the Toms River at the foot of the bluff, a favorite spot for walking and watching sailboats.

Cottage Museum. A small local history museum with a spring speaker series and family events through the year.

Ocean County Artists' Guild. A nonprofit art gallery and studio in town with exhibits, classes and workshops.

Sailfest. A September waterfront festival sponsored by the Rotary Club of Toms River.

Garden Tour and Christmas House Tour. Annual tours of local gardens in June and of decorated historic homes at the holidays, along with a December tree lighting.

Ocean County Library, Island Heights Branch. A small branch at 121 Central Avenue; the town's library dates to 1907 and joined the county system in 1978.

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MOVING CHECKLIST

Setting up your home in Island Heights

Tick each one off as you go. Most of these take one phone call or a few minutes online.

- [ ] **Borough hall.** Island Heights Borough Hall, One Wanamaker Municipal Complex, Island Heights, NJ 08732 (mail: P.O. Box 797).https://islandheightsborough.gov

- [ ] **Property taxes.** Tax office phone 732-270-6415. The tax collector is in Borough Hall at the Wanamaker Municipal Complex. New Jersey property taxes are paid quarterly, due February 1, May 1, August 1 and November 1, with a 10 day grace period before interest is charged back to the due date. Not receiving a bill does not change the due date, so new owners should confirm with the tax office where bills will be sent.

- [ ] **Water and sewer.** Island Heights Borough (borough water and sewer). 732-270-6414. The borough provides water and sewer and bills quarterly, with due dates in mid March, June, September and December. Payments can be made online, by check or in the Borough Hall drop box. Call the water and sewer clerk to arrange a final reading before closing.

- [ ] **Electric.** Jersey Central Power and Light (JCP&L), a FirstEnergy company. Outage line 1-888-544-4877.

- [ ] **Gas.** New Jersey Natural Gas. 1-800-221-0051 (customer service); 1-800-427-5325 (gas leaks, 24 hours).

- [ ] **Trash and recycling.** The garbage and recycling schedule is posted on the borough website. Bulk items are picked up by appointment on the last Friday of each month; call Borough Hall to book. Tires and electronics go to the borough recycling center at 130 Lake Avenue. Public Works: 732-270-6424.

- [ ] **Driver's license and voting.** New Jersey law (N.J.S.A. 39:3-36) requires drivers to report a new address to the Motor Vehicle Commission within one week, and the MVC prefers that you do it online. To register to vote or update your address, use the state's online voter registration or send a paper form to the Ocean County Commissioner of Registration or Superintendent of Elections. Registration closes 21 days before an election. The Ocean County Clerk handles vote by mail ballots.

- [ ] **Flood zone.** Look up any address on the FEMA Flood Map Service Center at msc.fema.gov. Homes up on the bluff and homes down by the river face very different flood risk, so get the flood zone and elevation certificate for each. New Jersey sellers must disclose a home's flood zone and flood history. Island Heights was not listed in FEMA's Community Rating System in the state's 2019 hazard mitigation plan.
- [ ] **Library.** Ocean County Library, Island Heights Branch, 121 Central Avenue, Island Heights, NJ 08732.
- [ ] **Post office.** Island Heights Post Office, in the Wanamaker Municipal Complex, Island Heights, NJ 08732.

Checked October 2026. Phone numbers and schedules change, so confirm with each office.

WHEN YOU SELL

The certificate every sale needs

New Jersey requires a Certificate of Smoke Alarm and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Compliance before a one or two family home is sold (N.J.A.C. 5:70-2.3). It is issued by the local fire official after an inspection, so apply well before closing. Since February 3, 2025 (P.L. 2025, c.19), a portable fire extinguisher is no longer part of this certificate for one and two family homes. We could not confirm from an official borough source whether Island Heights requires its own resale certificate of occupancy or inspection, so confirm with the code enforcement office at Borough Hall (732-270-6415) before listing. Because most of the town is a historic district, ask also what review applies to exterior work.

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QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

Questions people ask us about Island Heights

Is Island Heights part of Toms River?

No. Island Heights has been its own borough since 1887, when it was formed from what is now Toms River Township. It has its own government and its own property tax rate, though it borders Toms River.

Is Island Heights a historic district?

Much of it is. The Island Heights Historic District covers 280 acres with 244 contributing buildings and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

Why is it called Island Heights?

The land was once an island, known as Doctor Johnson's Island and later Dillon's Island. The town sits on a bluff about 60 feet above the Toms River, which gives the heights part of the name.

How did Island Heights begin?

The Methodist Island Heights Association created a camp meeting site, similar to Ocean Grove, and about 1,500 people came to the first camp meeting in 1878. Cottages followed, and the Pennsylvania Railroad built a branch line to town in 1883.

Where is the closest grocery store to Island Heights?

There is no supermarket in Island Heights itself. The closest are a Stop & Shop on Route 37 East, a ShopRite on Fischer Boulevard and a ShopRite on Route 37 West, all a few minutes away in Toms River. Across the bay on Route 37, there is also an Acme at Ortley Plaza in Ortley Beach.

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TO FILL IN ON YOUR VISITS

Touring the sections of town

Drive or walk each part of town at different times of day. Note the streets you liked, the traffic, the water and anything to ask us about.

The historic district on the bluff	
The riverfront	
Around Dillon's Creek	
The east end	

Is Island Heights right for you?

HOW WELL DOES THE TOWN FIT?	GREAT FIT	OKAY	NOT A FIT
Getting to work and family	☐	☐	☐
Groceries and everyday errands	☐	☐	☐
Restaurants and things to do	☐	☐	☐
Parks and time outdoors	☐	☐	☐
Being on or near the water	☐	☐	☐
Flood zone and insurance	☐	☐	☐
Property taxes	☐	☐	☐
The kinds of homes available	☐	☐	☐
Traffic and summer crowds	☐	☐	☐
How it feels on the streets you saw	☐	☐	☐

Streets or homes to look at again

Questions to ask us

TALK IT THROUGH

Call or text either of us

Thinking about moving to Island Heights, or selling a home there? Call or text either of us. We will tell you what we know about the town, honestly, and help you plan the next step.



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More guides and our town guides at **franasilk.com**

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