

# Maryland Lighthouse Challenge

▲ By Judy Colbert

■ Hooper's Island Lighthouse at Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, St. Michaels. Photo by Judy Colbert

## MAKING MARYLAND MEMORIES ONE LIGHTHOUSE AT A TIME!

With precise navigation and a little luck, the only connection you'll have with a lighthouse is when one helps you stay away from dangerous waters. Usually, you just don't want to be near them.

Come the weekend of September 21-22, however, you'll be able to visit or view 10 lighthouses and a lightship along the Bay's shores and tributaries in the 12th Maryland Lighthouse Challenge. You'll learn about each light's history, the architects, and the lightkeepers' families while you can meet some of the couple of hundred of people who participate in each challenge.

"We have had people visit the lights from all over the world including Europe and Asia. Some are first timers, perhaps visiting family, who decided to try something new," says Cory Talbott, president of the Chesapeake Chapter of the United States Lighthouse Society and lighthouse challenge coordinator.

"Others come from all over the United States because they are avid lighthouse fans. They often are the ones wearing lighthouse clothing or vests with patches of the various lights they have been to. Some bring a stuffed mascot that they take pictures with at every light. We do get a lot from the Eastern seaboard, checking out lights different from their own. We get people who are descendants of lighthouse keepers and groups of Boy and Girl Scouts who are earning their Lighthouse Badge."

You can meet Cory at Fort Washington, wearing a custom-made lighthouse suit.

The lights on this year's Challenge include: Concord Point (the oldest continuously operating light in Maryland), Seven Foot Knoll (moved by barge from the mouth of the Patapsco River to Baltimore's Pier 5 in the Inner Harbor in 1988), Light-

ship Chesapeake (docked at Pier III in the Inner Harbor), Hooper Strait (moved to St. Michaels in 1966 when it had a copper roof installed which is why it has a green roof instead of a red one), Choptank River replica (completed in 2012), Drum Point (now at the Calvert Marine Museum and on the National Register of Historic Places), Cove Point (the fully restored keeper's building available for overnight visits of three, four, or seven days), Piney Point (oldest light on the Potomac River), Point Lookout (under extensive renovation), Fort Washington (managed by the National Park Service), and Sandy Point Shoal (about 2/3 miles offshore and privately owned and not open for tours). Millers Island and Blackstone replica are bonus lights.

You can visit some or all lights along the challenge route, where you will receive a souvenir at each light, a two-inch board coin with a watercolor of the light created by noted New Jersey artist Donna Elias. However, you'll have to visit all of them to be able to say, "I've seen the lights!" and collect a special souvenir just for those who complete the challenge. Volunteers will be at each light to answer your questions. Some lights are not normally open or are open at limited times, and some admission prices are waived (Sandy Point State Park) or reduced. Also, other souvenirs are available at some lights. The challenge takes place rain or shine.

Joyce Baki of Lusby has done part of the challenge a couple of times. She says,

*"I can think of no other edifice constructed by man as altruistic as a lighthouse. They were built only to serve."*

~George Bernard Shaw

"I love lighthouses and their history. Could you just imagine the things they have seen—shipwrecks, submarines during the war, steamboats? I didn't do the entire tour, although I learned about others that I plan to visit later. The lighthouses had docents or narrators that are sometimes not available for regular tours. They told great stories and history. I continue to visit the lighthouses in the state because the challenge has increased my interest."

An all-day bonus cruise, including a family-style seafood lunch on Smith Island, to visit some of the Bay's more elusive lighthouses (Hooper Island, Point No Point, Point Lookout, Smith Point, Solomons Lump, and Holland Island Bar) is offered on Thursday, Friday, and Monday, if you want to make an extended weekend of the challenge.

The rules are simple: Visit the website to print the directions to each light ([ches-lights.org](http://ches-lights.org)), click on "MD Lighthouse Challenge", visit the lighthouses and lightship between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, receive the souvenir from each light, and then collect the "completion" souvenir at the last location and sign the challenge completion sheet. ■