



Fact Sheet

OVERVIEW

Situated in the heart of New Jersey, Somerset County offers visitors and residents a broad range of leisure activities, destinations/attractions, educational opportunities, and lifestyle-enhancing experiences. The county comprises 21 diverse municipalities—from the horse country of the Somerset Hills in the north to the business centers and corporate campuses in the central region to the rural farms of the south. Several national and global corporations are headquartered or have offices here, including AT&T, Verizon Wireless, and Ethicon (a J&J subsidiary). Covering 305 square miles and home to over 335,000 residents, Somerset County borders Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Morris, and Union counties. It is easily accessible to New York City, Philadelphia and the Jersey Shore region, within one hour by car. Several Somerset County destinations, events, and experiences are featured in the 2019 NJ State Travel Guide.

TOURISM FACTS & FIGURES

According to the 2017 Somerset County Tourism Economic Impact Study (conducted by Tourism Economics):

- Tourism in Somerset County is a \$1.2 billion industry.
- Its growth in 2017 exceeded that of all immediate competitors and all of the state's shore counties.
- The county's tourism industry supports 20,000 jobs, and tourism contributes the equivalent of \$1,200 dollars in state and local taxes for every Somerset County household.

ACCOMMODATIONS

There are 33 hotels and inns and more than 4,000 rooms throughout Somerset County, with many more coming in the next two years. Accommodations offer leisure and business travelers many options in terms of style, price, and ambiance: historic country inns for romantic getaways, national hotel brands that cater to business and leisure travelers as well as tour groups, and upscale banquet facilities and conference centers for social and corporate events.

Coming in 2020: Pendry Natirar, where the 1912 Tudor-style mansion will be restored and renovated with an adjoining hotel, resort, and residences crafted for farm-style living. The ultra-

luxury resort will include a full-service destination Spa Pendry, fitness center, swimming pool, tennis courts and outdoor activities, with trail paths groomed for hiking, biking, and horseback riding. Natirar also offers a private social membership club.

HISTORIC & CULTURAL SITES

Somerset County was established by charter on May 22, 1688, with land conveyances dating to 1651, making it one of the nation's oldest counties. It has abundant historic sites, monuments and buildings, some dating back to Dutch colonial settlers and the American Revolution, in virtually every town. These include 63 historic sites and 29 historic districts that are either listed or pending listing on the National or New Jersey Historic Registers (<https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/home/showdocument?id=8104>). Among them are homesteads, bridges and stations, meeting houses and town centers.

ATTRACTIONS

Visitors should make plans to visit these popular Somerset County attractions:

- **[USGA Golf Museum](#)** – Home to the world's premier collection of golf artifacts and memorabilia. Through books, videos and broadcast documentaries, the USGA tells the story of the game's development in the United States, highlighting the greatest moments in the game's history, with a particular focus on USGA champions and championships.
- **[Duke Farms](#)** – At 2,740-acres, it is one of the largest privately-owned parcels of undeveloped land in the state and a model of environmental stewardship in the 21st century. Once the home of tobacco magnate J.B. Duke and his daughter, Doris Duke (who bequeathed the estate to Somerset County), it has the nation's largest allotment-style (community) garden, and is a destination for hiking and biking (with on-site bike rentals), wildlife-watching, a farm-to-table market, workshops, programs, and annual special events.
- **[Branchburg Sports Complex](#)** – 78,000 square feet of fields, courts, batting cages, an arcade and activities; and a 9,000-square foot interactive, fantasy-themed laser tag arena—the largest on the East Coast.
- **[USET Foundation](#)** – Training ground of the U.S. Equestrian Team, the Foundation, in Peapack-Gladstone, hosts some of New Jersey's premier equestrian events.
- **[Scherman-Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary](#)** – Headquarters of the New Jersey Audubon Society and wildlife sanctuary on 276 acres of woodland, field, and floodplain habitat, and home to over 200 species of wildlife in Basking Ridge, Bedminster and Harding Township. Visit the environmental learning center, tree-top level observation deck, bookstore, and exhibits.
- **[D& R Canal State Park](#)** – The 70-mile park is one of central New Jersey's most popular recreational corridors for canoeing, jogging, hiking, bicycling, fishing, and horseback riding. It is also a valuable wildlife corridor connecting fields and forests, and contains standing buildings and remnants of colonial America.
- **[Jacobus Vanderveer House & Museum](#)** – Site of America's first military training academy, The Pluckemin Cantonment; headquarters for General Henry Knox (Washington's Chief of Artillery during the Revolutionary War and the country's first Secretary of War). The Vanderveer house interprets Dutch colonial life in America and hosts historical events.
- **[TD Bank Ballpark](#)** – Home of the Somerset Patriots minor league baseball team, in Bridgewater.

Find more great places to visit and enjoy at www.visitsomersetnj.org.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Throughout the year, visitors come to Somerset County for a variety of major events that cater to a range of interests and ages. Among them are significant equestrian events, music festivals, Weekend Journey Through the Past, Tour of Somerville cycling race, Somerset Patriots opening day, World Series of Birding, the Firefly Festival and Sugar Maple Celebration at Duke Farms, Somerset County 4-H Fair, and Colonial Christmas. A complete updated list is at <https://visitsomersetnj.org/2019-major-events/>.

FUN STUFF TO DO

- **Equestrian events/activities:** Somerset County is a horse lover's paradise and is where the US Olympic Equestrian Team trained for decades, in Gladstone. Today, the USET Foundation hosts important equestrian events (Garden State Horse Show, Monmouth at the Team); riders and spectators also come to Far Hills for the Mars-Essex Trials and Far Hills Race Meeting. Equestrian centers, riding and boarding stables, and horse farms are found throughout the county.
- **Golf:** From award-winning Neshanic Valley Golf Club to the USGA Golf Museum, there are greens galore, learning centers, and golf memorabilia to enjoy. There are seven public and more than a dozen private golf courses in Somerset County.
- **Birding:** Birders flock to Somerset County for its remarkable diversity of birdlife, which surpasses many larger areas with its expanse of parks, open green spaces, and wide variety of distinct habitats. There are three Important Bird & Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) and New Jersey Audubon's headquarters.
- **Gardens:** Somerset County is home to five internationally recognized garden experiences to explore that offer changing botanical beauty year 'round. You'll find walled gardens and native plants at Cross Estate Gardens, a must-see historic rock garden at Leonard J. Buck Garden, one of the most extensive collections of peonies anywhere at Peony's Envy, an accredited All-America Rose Selections display garden with 325 varieties at Rudolph van der Goot Rose Garden, and exotic orchids at Duke Farms' Orchid Range.

Somerset County Tourism offers customizable itineraries for these visitors and groups interested in these specialty areas at <https://visitsomersetnj.org/itineraries/>.

RECREATION

Somerset County is the place to be for outdoor recreation. The county's 15,000+ acres of parkland include picnic areas, hiking and bicycling trails, a swimming pool, horse stables, an environmental education center, and the County Fairgrounds, which hosts the Somerset County 4-H Fair. Take in a minor league baseball game, hike and bike hundreds of miles of trails, canoe and kayak . . . the list goes on.

<https://visitsomersetnj.org/play/parks-and-recreation/>

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION/STEWARDSHIP

Somerset County is the heart of New Jersey's environmental conservation initiatives.

Duke Farms in Hillsborough (on the grounds of the former Doris Duke estate) is one of the largest privately-owned parcels of undeveloped land in New Jersey; it is a major environmental education center and offers acres of hiking and bike trails. There is also the Somerset County Environmental Education Center at Lord Stirling Park.

The New Jersey Audubon Society is headquartered at and operates the 276-acre Scherman-Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary, which also has an environmental learning center. Fairview Farm Wildlife Preserve, home to Raritan Headwaters Association, is a living classroom with habitat restoration projects and scientific studies underway to support native flora and fauna, including a number of threatened and endangered species. Visitors may use the hiking trails, fishing pond, enjoy the bird and butterfly garden, and more. Read about these at <https://visitsomersetnj.org/play/agri-tourism/>.

FOOD & BEVERAGE

The county is known for its eclectic dining options that cater to many tastes from A (for Afghan) to V (for vegetarian) (<https://visitsomersetnj.org/dine/>). The luxurious Ninety Acres at Natirar is a farm-to-table, fine dining concept set amid the rolling Somerset Hills. Basking Ridge and Bernardsville offer diners five-star dining choices for special occasions and business dinners, and downtown Somerville is hopping, with international and creative cuisine. There are also popular casual theme concepts at Bridgewater Commons.

Where there's food, there's drink and lots of it. Somerset County is enjoying a growing beverage tourism trade, with craft breweries and brew pubs (check out the scene in Somerville), and numerous places to sample great locally-crafted wines and beers. Oenophiles can also make their own wine at several establishments.

SHOPPING

Bridgewater Commons is a large regional shopping mall anchored by major retailers. It has boutiques, national specialty stores, a dine-in movie theatre, restaurants, and more. New to the area is Chimney Rock Crossing & Chimney Rock Plaza with popular outlet stores (Nordstrom Rack, Saks on Fifth), apparel and specialty stores, Whole Foods, and fast casual restaurants. Somerset County's main business areas—some in our historic downtown areas, such as Somerville—are home to many interesting local merchants, antique stores, and boutiques. Throughout 2019 and into 2020 new retail centers will be coming into Montgomery and Bridgewater. <https://visitsomersetnj.org/play/shopping>

TRANSPORTATION

Many towns in Somerset County are located along NJ Transit lines, with train service to New York and Philadelphia via the Raritan Valley and Morris-Essex lines as well as bus service. The county is traversed via major interstates, U.S. and county highways, including I-278, I-78, U.S.22 and U.S. 202/206. On-demand ride services (Uber, Lyft) are amply available throughout Somerset County.