



## These boots were made for exploring

Southern California offers many short summer day hikes for exploring and recreation throughout their state parks. They provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, remarkable scenery and free usage or minimal fees, which make exploring the outdoor environment an enjoyable habit.

As many native Californians know, some people think that all Californians do is surf and lie around the beach. With places like [Malibu Lagoon State Beach](#), who can blame them? This popular surfing spot sparked beach blanket movies and 1950s era songs, and it's what makes California—well California. The Lagoon has waterfowl, the historic Adamson House and a 700-foot long pier built in 1903. But don't stop there, proceed down the beach shadowed by homes of movie stars, and get lost in the evening glow of the Southern California sun as wet sand parts way for footprints.

Maybe getting away from the sandy beach is more of an ideal hiking setting. If so, then seeing the ranch of famed cowboy legend [Will Rogers State Historic Park](#) deserves a visit. California set aside the property as a state historic park in the Santa Monica Mountains. The park consists of Will's family home and trails designed by him. An easy hike to the top of Inspiration Point on a clear day has views of the Santa Monica Bay, the San Gabriel Mountains, and Catalina Island.

Continuing on with the thought of easy hikes is [Malibu Creek State Park](#). This property that was once inhabited by the likes of Bob Hope and Ronald Reagan is now a state park. Malibu Creek is sought after in the Hollywood film scene for its remarkable rock gorge and man-made lake. The creek winds through the park inviting visitors to follow and explore popular film making areas. It's here that visitors begin to lose themselves in the Santa Monica Mountains and create distance from the Pacific Coast Highway. Wandering the 7,000 acre park brings back familiar scenes from M.A.S.H., Swiss Family Robinson, and Tarzan.

When wanting to get away from the hustle and bustle of fast paced city life without leaving the city, look no farther than [Chino Hills State Park](#). Situated in Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties, the park offers a needed break from hectic city life. Take a leisurely hike alongside rolling green hills, whispering creeks, and comforting oaks. Miles of trails introduce wildlife and panoramic views.

Early summer hikes at [Palomar Mountain State Park](#) allow for seeing dogwood blooms, and views of mountain meadows that closely resemble the Sierra Nevada environment. After hiking, take in the trout-stocked pond from a nearby picnic table. While relaxing, visitors can imagine the hideouts and escape routes that were once used by cattle rustlers as they waited until it was safe to cross the Mexican border.

Speaking of borders, hop into a gondola at [Mount San Jacinto State Park](#) and hold on as the tram whisks from the desert floor to 8,000 feet in minutes. Once atop this mountain retreat above Palm Springs, step into the Switzerland type environment of tall mountains, rugged cliff faces, lodgepole pine trees, and open meadows. From the top are sights of the Pacific Ocean, the Colorado Desert and a distant view of Mexico.

Planning a trip to the desert makes for an afternoon of fun at [Anza-Borrego Desert State Park](#). What makes this desert park different from other state parks is its ability to offer so many environments. While walking through the park, visitors can experience wildlife, cacti, waterfall cascades and seasonal wildflowers. Perhaps one of the most amazing sites is the Palm Canyon waterfall that cascades over huge boulders, creating sunlit rainbows. If that's not enough, the desert floor mesmerizes viewers with a kaleidoscope of springtime wildflowers challenging even the largest box of color crayons. The drive is well worth the trip and the photos are worth a million words, just don't forget lots of film.

After a warm day in the desert, looking for a way to cool off starts with Mitchell Caverns Natural Preserve where inside, the temperature is always 65 degrees. The caverns are located at the [Providence Mountains State Recreation Area](#). A guided tour leads visitors into the stalactite-filled and stalagmite-filled cavern. Park rangers lead on through the well lit cavern sharing tales of nature and stories about the previous inhabitants, the Chemehuevi Indians. The two hour tour quickly passes leaving visitors cooled and refreshed.

No more excuses for not getting out and seeing the wonderful sites of California. Many are close to large cities and all offer a completely different view of the state. Most of all, state parks are available for all ages and provide something for even the most seasoned outdoor visitor.

To search for a park by region, county/city, or activities go to [Find-A-Park](#)