

# Family Fun Near Los Angeles/Central Coast in California State Parks

Within a fairly easy drive of Los Angeles and California's Central Coast, **California State Parks** provide the perfect place for families to discover the state's natural and cultural wonders.

## **MONARCH BUTTERFLIES**

Each year, millions of monarch butterflies from west of the Rocky Mountains fly thousands of miles to spend their winter in coastal California, including California State Parks. The butterflies' bright golden/orange wings can make it look like the trees they rest on are covered with thousands of brilliant orange moving leaves.

From mid-October through the end of March, the butterflies make their home in a number of State Parks. Southern California parks include:

**Point Mugu State Park** [VENTURA COUNTY, phone (818) 880-0350 or (805) 986-8591], 15 miles south of Oxnard on Highway One (Pacific Coast Highway), is home to the monarchs from October through March. They can be seen in the park's native Sycamore trees in Sycamore Canyon campground. The park is a Watchable Wildlife Site. 

The park is located in the Santa Monica Mountains and features five miles of ocean shoreline, two canyons, wide grassy valleys, and over 70 miles of hiking trails. The park has a small visitor center with interpretive displays.

**Leo Carrillo State Park** [LOS ANGELES COUNTY, phone (818) 880-0350 or (805) 986-8591], located 28 miles northwest of Santa Monica on

Highway One, also has a seasonal population of monarchs in eucalyptus trees along the Mulholland Highway.

The park has 1.5 miles of beach, including tidepools, coastal caves and underwater reefs or kelp forests for exploring. Nature walks and campfire programs are offered from Memorial Day to Labor Day. (Call the park for schedules.) A small visitor center features interpretive displays.

**Malibu Lagoon State Beach** [LOS ANGELES COUNTY, phone (818) 880-0350] is also temporary home to the butterflies. The park is a Watchable Wildlife site. 

The park has 22 acres of coastline, with surfing and birdwatching opportunities as well as fishing off the nearby pier. The lagoon is where Malibu Creek meets the sea. The Adamson House (a National Historic Landmark) is on the property. Built in 1929, the house is known for its decorative Malibu tiles and custom-built features. Adjacent to the house is a museum featuring displays about the Native Americans who once inhabited the area. Tours of the house are available. Call the park for more information.

### **WHALE WATCHING**

From December through April, visitors have the opportunity to view the return of the gray whale, the state's official marine mammal.

The annual migration of thousands of gray whales (up to 50 feet long and 50 tons each) begins in Alaska and moves along the California coastline to birthing and breeding waters in

Baja, California. Traveling 70 to 80 miles per day, the whales' heart-shaped spouts of exchanged air and vaporized water (sometimes reaching 15 feet high) can be seen as they surface every three to five minutes to breathe.

The migrating whales can be seen from Mugu Beach in Pt. **Mugu State Park**, from the bluffs in **Leo Carrillo State Park**, from the Malibu Bluffs in **Malibu Lagoon State Beach**, and from **Point Dume State Beach**, where visitors can view the massive creatures in the deep water at the edge of the park.

**Point Dume State Beach** [LOS ANGELES COUNTY, phone (818) 880-0350] is 18 miles west of Santa Monica. The beach features headlands, cliffs, secluded coves and tidepools. This park offers an excellent view – almost like watching the whales from the side of an ocean-going boat.

### **MOVIE LOCATIONS**

Many famous movies have been filmed in state parks. Because of the great variety of trees, plants and flowers in the area, the parks have “stood-in” for locations around the world. Movie buffs will be able to recognize familiar filming sites in many state parks.

**Point Mugu State Park** was the film location for “Six Days, Seven Nights” (it was also filmed at Leo Carrillo State Beach), “Loaded Weapon” and “Junior.”

“The Karate Kid,” “That Thing You Do,” and the “X-Files” TV show were filmed in **Leo Carrillo State Park**.

**Malibu Creek State Park** has been the site of many, many movie shoots, including “How Green Was My Valley,” “Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House,” “Planet of the Apes,” “Beneath the Planet of the Apes,” “How The West Was

Won,” “Chisolm,” “Swiss Family Robinson,” “Roots,” “Dr. Dolittle,” “The Sand Pebbles,” “The Towering Inferno,” “M\*A\*S\*H,” and “Pleasant .” The park is also a Watchable Wildlife site.

**Malibu Creek State Park** [LOS ANGELES COUNTY, phone (818) 880-0350] is just 25 miles from downtown Los Angeles. The park has over 4,000 acres, featuring opportunities for hiking, fishing, bird watching and horseback riding. The park was the center of Chumash Native American life for centuries.

**NOTE:** It is always a good idea to call the parks before a visit to check on current conditions.

For California State Parks camping reservations, the toll-free ReserveAmerica, Inc. camping reservations hotline is (800) 444-PARK (7275) between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Pacific Time, seven days a week. Reservations may be charged to VISA or Master Card.

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