

Crashing waves, redwoods and historic sites

Discover California State Parks in the Monterey Area

Some of the most beautiful sights in California can be found in Monterey area California State Parks. Rocky cliffs, crashing waves, redwood trees, and historic sites are within an easy drive of each other.

"When you look at the diversity of state parks within the Monterey District area, you begin to realize that there is something for everyone - recreational activities, scenic beauty, natural and cultural history sites, and educational programs," said Dave Schaechtele, State Parks Monterey District Public Information Officer. "There are great places to have fun with families and friends, and peaceful and inspirational settings that are sure to bring out the poet, writer, photographer, or artist in you. Some people return to their favorite state parks, year-after-year, while others venture out and discover some new and wonderful places that are then added to their 'favorites' list."

State Parks in the area include:

Limekiln State Park, 54 miles south of Carmel off Highway One and two miles south of the town of Lucia, features vistas of the Big Sur coast, redwoods, and the remains of historic limekilns. The Rockland Lime and Lumber Company built these rock and steel furnaces in 1887 to cook the limestone mined from the canyon walls. The 711-acre park allows visitors an opportunity to enjoy the atmosphere of Big Sur's southern coast. The park has the only safe access to the shoreline along this section of coast. For

reservations at the park's 36 campsites, call ReserveAmerica at (800) 444-PARK (7275). The park phone number is (831) 667-2403.


Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park, 36 miles south of Carmel on Highway One and 11 miles south of Pfeiffer Big Sur, stretches from the coastline to nearby 3,000-foot ridges. The park features redwoods and an 80-foot waterfall. Hikers can discover the park's backcountry via several trail systems. A panoramic view of the ocean and miles of coastline is available from the higher elevations along the trails east of Highway One. The park also has a 1,620-acre underwater reserve that protects a spectacular assortment of marine life. Special-use permits allow experienced scuba divers to explore the reserve at Partington Cove. Seals, sea lions and sea otters can be seen in the park's coves. From December through April, the park can provide an excellent place for whale watching.

The park is named for Julia Pfeiffer Burns, the daughter of Big Sur pioneers Michael and Barbara Pfeiffer and friend of Lathrap and Helen Brown. When Helen Brown donated the Saddle Rock Ranch to be used as a state park, she requested that the park be dedicated to, and named in memory of, her friend.

There are two environmental campgrounds, located west of the highway in a cypress grove a little over a quarter mile from the parking lot, which offer spectacular views of the ocean and the coastline. Each site has a storage cabinet and a fire pit. Primitive toilets are nearby. Campers must carry in their own water. For reservations, call ReserveAmerica at (800) 444-PARK (7275). For more information about the park, call (831) 667-2315.

Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park, 26 miles south of Carmel on Highway One, has 1,006 acres of forest, including towering redwoods, coastal scrub and open meadows. Hikers can enjoy the park's many scenic trails, including a self-guided nature trail. An overlook provides a spectacular view of the Big Sur River Valley. Wildlife watchers can see wild deer, raccoons, skunks, and various birds, including the endangered California condor. The large campground has 214 sites, many of them situated near the Big Sur River which runs through the park. For reservations, call ReserveAmerica at (800) 444-PARK (7275). The park phone number is (831) 667-2315.

When the State purchased 680 acres from John Pfeiffer, Julia Pfeiffer Burns' brother, the new park was named in his honor. John and his wife Florence had operated the Pfeiffer's Ranch Resort. Today, the concession-operated Big Sur Lodge is at that same site within the park. Visitors can stay in one of the Lodge's 61 cottages, enjoy a meal in the full service restaurant, or make purchases at the gift and camp stores. For more information and reservations, call (800) 424-4787 or visit www.bigsurlodge.com.

Andrew Molera State Park, 22 miles south of Carmel on Highway One, contains 4,766 acres, with miles of trails winding through meadows, beaches and hilltops and the Big Sur River running through the park. The area is still relatively undeveloped and offers great hiking opportunities as well as fishing and beachcombing. The park is a Watchable Wildlife site. 

A unique way to explore this park is by horse. Visitors can enjoy rides of varying lengths with the guides from Molera Horseback Tours. For more

information about this concession operation, call (800) 942-5486, or visit www.molerahorsebacktours.com.

Also located within the park is the Ventana Wilderness Society's Big Sur Ornithology Lab. Visitors can visit the Lab and, during most of the year, observe the morning bird-banding and research activities. Public programs are conducted on summer weekends. The Lab also provides field support for Ventana Wilderness Society's ongoing efforts to reintroduce the rare California Condor to Big Sur. Visit www.ventananeews.org for more information.

When Frances Molera sold the family ranch that was to become the state park, it was with the condition that it be named after her brother Andrew. Visitors can see the former ranch complex. The Molera Interpretive Center, located in the old ranch house, provides a fascinating glimpse into the park's rich natural and cultural history. Check with park staff for current hours of operation.

The park contains a primitive walk-in trail camp, located approximately one-third mile from the parking area, with 24 campsites that can accommodate up to four people each. This area is popular with hikers and bikers. The campground has no showers. Reservations are not available, so visitors should contact the park directly for information about camping availability at (831) 667-2315.

Point Sur State Historic Park, 15 miles south of Carmel along Highway One, reflects over 100 years of maritime and military history. The Point Sur Light Station was active from 1889 to 1974 and the U.S. Coast Guard continues to operate the lighthouse light. Sitting 361 feet above the surf on a large volcanic

rock, the light station was established for the safety of seagoing vessels moving up and down the Big Sur coast. First lit on August 1, 1889, and automated in 1974, the lighthouse has remained in continuous operation. Over the years, four lighthouse keepers and their families lived at the station. Point Sur has been a navigational landmark throughout history and the nearby coastline has been the site of several renowned shipwrecks, most notably the US Navy dirigible *MACON* in 1935.

Point Sur is on the National Register of Historic Places and is a California State Historic Landmark. Tours of the facilities are available on weekends year-round and seasonally on Wednesday and Thursdays. For tour information, call (831) 625-4419 or the Big Sur Station at (831) 667-2316, or visit www.pointsur.org.


The park also contains the former Point Sur Naval Facility (NAVFAC) which was decommissioned in 1984 and its base abandoned. Operational from 1957 to 1977, the Point Sur NAVFAC played a culturally important role in the overall history of the growth and development of the military presence at Point Sur and Cold War defensive technology. Currently the facility is closed to the public but planning efforts are underway regarding its future use.

Garrapata State Park, located on Highway One, 6.7 miles south of Rio Road in Carmel (18 miles north of Big Sur), has nearly one mile of beachfront, three miles of rocky shoreline, and eight miles of hiking trails into dense redwood groves and spectacular views of the Pacific. Visitors should keep in mind when hiking that “garrapata” is the Spanish word for “tick.” Poison oak is also common


throughout the park. Water recreation is extremely hazardous, due to strong rip currents. The 2,938-acre park features outstanding coastal headlands at Soberanes Point. Sea lions, harbor seals and sea otters frequent the coastal waters and California gray whales pass close by during their yearly migration. The park phone number is (831) 624-4909.

Point Lobos State Reserve, located three miles south of Carmel on Highway One, gets its name from the offshore rocks at Punta de los Lobos Marinos, or Point of the Sea Wolves, where the sound of the sea lions carries inland. The reserve has often been called "the greatest meeting of land and water in the world," not only because of its spectacular beauty, but also because of its unique natural resources, which includes rare plant communities, endangered archeological sites, and unique geological formations.

Point Lobos contains headlands, coves and rolling meadows. The offshore area has one of the richest underwater habitats in the world and is extremely popular with divers. Wildlife includes seals, sea lions, sea otters and migrating gray whales (from December to May). Thousands of seabirds also make the reserve their home. Hiking trails follow the shoreline and lead to hidden coves. The area used to be the home of a turn-of -the-century whaling and abalone industry. A small cabin, now a museum, from that era still remains on Whaler's Cove, near Carmel.

The reserve is a popular destination for sightseeing, photography, painting, nature study, picnicking, SCUBA diving, and jogging. The park is a Watchable Wildlife site. 

For more information, call (831) 624-4909 or visit www.pointlobos.org/

Carmel River State Beach, a mile-long stretch of beach located on Monterey Bay in Carmel, includes a bird sanctuary with a wide variety of waterfowl and song birds. The park is a Watchable Wildlife site. 

Monastery Beach, also known as San Jose Creek Beach, is part of the park and is popular with scuba divers. Swimming and wading are *extremely* dangerous. The park phone number is (831) 624-4909.

Asilomar State Beach and Conference Center, located on Asilomar Avenue in Pacific Grove, offers just what the word "asilomar" means: "a refuge by the sea," with breathtaking views of cypress, surf and sand. The center began in 1913 as a camp and conference site for the YWCA. The State of California has operated the center since 1956. The complex was designed by noted California architect Julia Morgan, who also designed Hearst Castle. Asilomar features meeting rooms, dining facilities and guest rooms situated on 105 secluded acres of scenic forest and sand dunes. A boardwalk across the dunes gives access to the beach and tide pools. Recreational facilities include a heated pool and social hall. The center is minutes from popular tourist destinations, such as 17 Mile Drive, Carmel, Cannery Row, the Monterey Bay Aquarium and Fisherman's Wharf. For more information, call (831) 372-8016.

Monterey State Historic Park is a collection of 19th century buildings located in the heart of Old Monterey. The city served as the capital of Alta California under Spanish, Mexican, and U.S military rule until 1849. (San Jose was selected as the first state capital site.) The U.S. flag was first officially raised

in Monterey on July 7, 1846, during the Mexican-American War, bringing 600,000 square miles of land, including California, under American rule. California's constitutional convention was held in Monterey in 1849 and on September 9, 1850, California became the 31st state to join the Union.

Sebastian Vizcaino was the first European to set foot on the Monterey Peninsula in December 19, 1602. He called it "Monterey" after Count de Monte Rey, a viceroy of New Spain.

Eleven buildings, including the Custom House, built in 1827, California's First Theater (1846-47), Robert Louis Stevenson House (currently closed for restoration), and several residences (now house museums) built in the 1830s-40s, preserve the area's rich history of early California. Many of these early adobe structures, as well as other buildings, have been restored throughout Monterey, including the Cooper-Molera Adobe, Casa Soberanes, and Larkin House. The Pacific House Museum (1847), located on Custom House Plaza, serves as a history museum and visitor center. A history theater is located across the plaza in the Stanton Center.

Guided walking tours of old Monterey and tours of the historic park's buildings are offered. For tour information, call (831) 649-7118. The park is open daily, except Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years Day. Gardens are open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Monterey State Beach is a favorite place for surfers and kayakers. Fishing is popular, too. The cities of Monterey and Seaside share the park, which has three separate beaches approximately a mile apart. Visitors also enjoy

kayaking, kite-flying and volleyball. The flat beach is an excellent place for beachcombing. The park is located at the Seaside exit off Highway 218 west of Highway One (the west end of Canyon del Rey Boulevard.) The park phone number is (831) 384-7695.

Marina State Beach, 10 miles north of Monterey at the foot of Reservation Road in Marina, is popular with hang-gliders, radio-controlled gliders, and kite-fliers. The beach is a favorite site for picnics, and has a boardwalk that winds through the Marina Dunes Natural Preserve. Water recreation is extremely hazardous, due to strong rip currents. The park phone number is (831) 384-7695.

Fifteen miles north of Monterey, **Salinas River State Beach** is a popular fishing site. The beach protects one of Monterey Bay's most interesting sand dune areas and is home to many species of wild birds, including Western meadowlarks, hawks, jays, valley quail, finches, towhees, sparrows, the endangered snowy plover, as well as shorebirds that winter along the bay. The park phone number is (831) 384-7695.

Moss Landing State Beach, located sixteen miles north of Monterey via Highway One, features offshore fishing and horseback riding trails. The beach is also popular with surfers and windsurfers. Coastal views and dune protection from afternoon winds makes the beach a favorite place for picnics. Birdwatching is also popular, since the area is an important stop along the Pacific Flyway. Water recreation is hazardous because of strong rip currents. The park phone number is (831) 384-7695.

Twenty miles northwest of Monterey off Highway One, **Zmudowski State Beach** is a popular fishing area, featuring perch, kingfish, sole, flounder, halibut, bocaccio (tomcod), jacksmelt, lingcod, cabezon, salmon, steelhead and occasional rockfish. The beach features the Pajaro River estuary, where a natural preserve has been set aside. The sandy beach is also popular with birdwatchers and equestrians. Horses are only allowed near the waterline. Swimming and water sports are hazardous because of strong rip-currents. The park phone number is (831) 384-7695.

The 220-acre Zmudowski State Beach was named for former landowner Mary Zmudowski, a Watsonville school teacher. The state acquired a 155-acre parcel from her in 1950, which included 9,124 feet of ocean frontage. In 1952 the Park Commission changed the name of the park from Pajaro River to Zmudowski to recognize the contribution of the family.

Other parks within California State Parks' Monterey District include:

Henry W. Coe State Park, located 14 miles east of Morgan Hill on East Dunne Avenue, is the largest state park in northern California. With over 87,000 acres of wild open spaces, the park features lofty ridges and steep canyons. Once the home of Ohlone Indians, the park has a variety of plants and animals, including the elusive mountain lion.

The park was named after Henry Willard Coe, Jr., whose daughter Sada Coe deeded the park to Santa Clara County in 1953. The county sold it to the state in 1958. Henry W. Coe, Jr., known to his friends as Harry, homesteaded

land deep in the Diablo mountain range in the 1880s. He bought out other homesteaders until he had a 13,000-acre cattle ranch.

Within the park are the headwaters of Coyote Creek, long stretches of the Pacheco and Orestimba creeks, and a 23,300-acre wilderness area.

The park is open year-round and is popular with hikers, mountain bikers, backpackers, equestrians, car campers, picnickers, and photographers.

Summers are hot and a time for shorter hikes. The cooling temperatures of fall bring more pleasant hiking weather and fall colors to the hillsides. A museum about early California ranching is open on weekends.

The park phone number is (831) 623-1655.

San Juan Bautista State Historic Park, on 2nd and Washington Streets in San Juan Bautista, is the site of one of California's 21 Franciscan missions. The location was once the largest town in central California and the hub of travel between northern and central California. It was founded in 1797. The mission, owned and operated by the Catholic Church, is the largest of its kind in California and has been in continuous use since July 1, 1812. The State Historic Park site includes several structures built in the 1800s, including the Plaza Hotel and stable, blacksmith shop, granary, jail and several houses. Park exhibits show California life of the Mission, Mexican and early American periods. The historic park overlooks the fertile San Benito Valley. The park phone number is (831) 623-4881.

Fremont Peak State Park, 11 miles south of San Juan Bautista on San Juan Canyon Road, features expansive views of Monterey Bay from its hiking

trails in the grasslands of the higher peaks of the Gavilan Range. Other views include the San Benito Valley, Salinas Valley, and the Santa Lucia Mountains east of Big Sur. Pine and oak woodlands in the park are home to many birds and mammals. There are camping and picnic facilities in the park.

The park phone number is (831) 623-4255.

The park also features an astronomical observatory with a 30-inch telescope, which is open for public programs on selected evenings. For more information about the observatory, call (831) 623-2465.

For more information about California State Parks, visit State Parks on line at www.parks.ca.gov.

For California State Parks camping reservations, the toll-free Reserve America 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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