

Harmony Headlands State Park

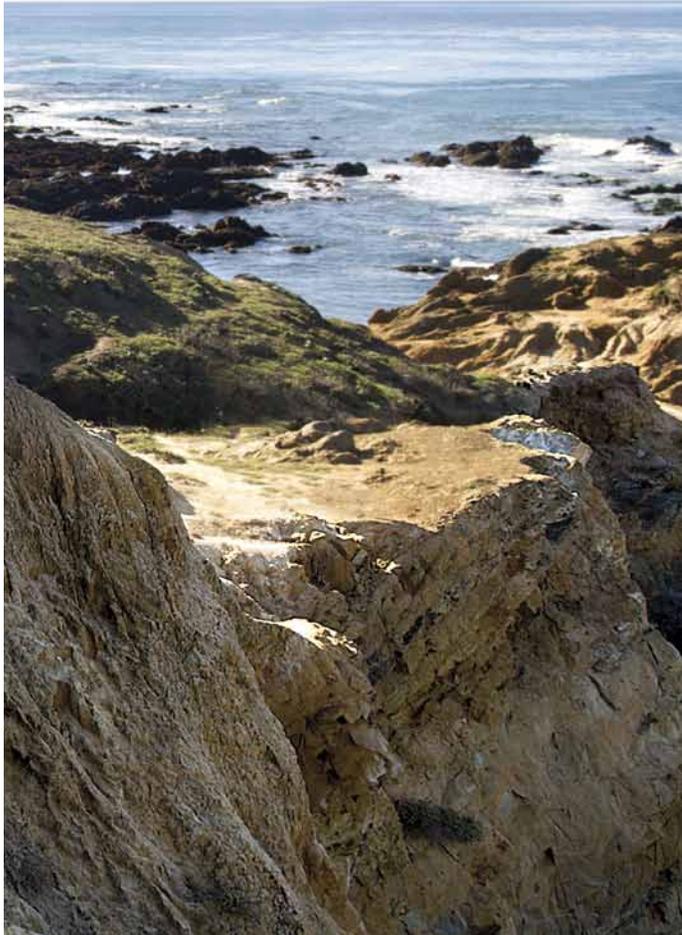


Our Mission

The mission of California State Parks is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



*The park's terrain—
rugged terraces,
plunging headlands,
rocky intertidal places
and coastal prairie
habitat—adds drama
to its pristine beauty.*



California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at (805) 772-7434. This publication is available in alternate formats by contacting:

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

P.O. Box 942896

Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

For information call: (800) 777-0369

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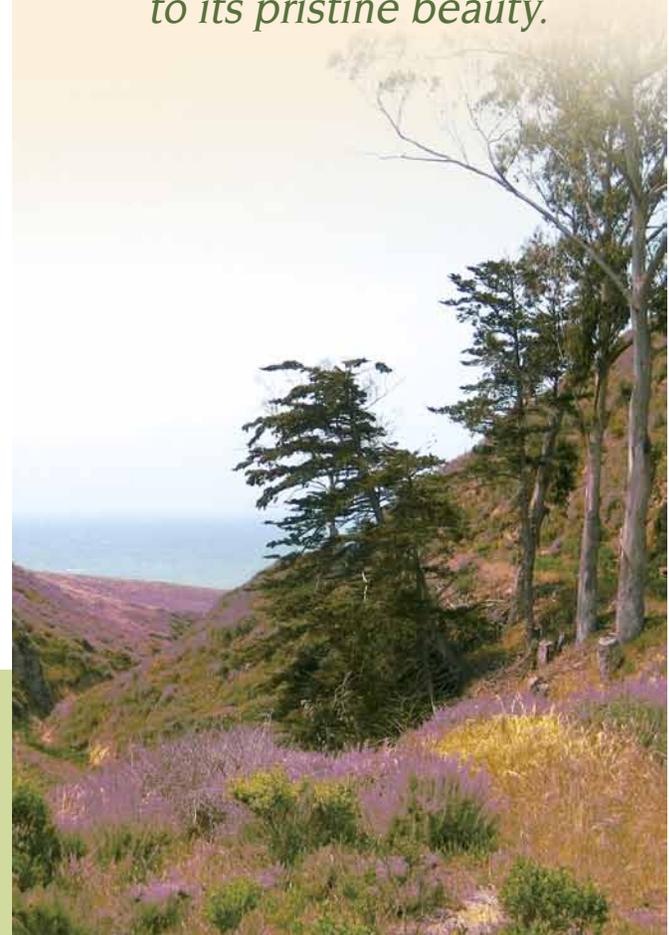
Discover the many states of California.™

Harmony Headlands State Park

4500 Highway One

Cayucos, CA 93430

(805) 772-7434



In a secluded and peaceful setting along Highway One, Harmony Headlands State Park adorns the stunningly beautiful Central Coast in San Luis Obispo County.

PARK HISTORY

Native People

Human occupation along California's Central Coast dates back at least 10,000 years. The native people, ancestors to today's Salinan or Chumash people, lived along the coastal bluffs and further inland. They traveled seasonally up and down stream drainages to take advantage of the various food, shelter and tool resources needed for survival.

European Settlement

The arrival of Europeans forever changed the lives of the native people. Recruited into the mission system, they succumbed to diseases to which they had no immunity. Those who survived became part of the labor force that built the missions and later worked on the ranchos. Today the Salinan and Chumash people are working to revive their ancient languages and cultural traditions.

The mission period began in 1769 with the arrival of the Portolá expedition. California was then a part of Mexico, a colony of Spain. In 1821, Mexico gained independence from Spain, and in 1833 the missions were secularized. Lands formerly owned by the missions were granted to individuals. Rancho San Geronimo, which incorporated part of what is now Harmony Headlands State Park, was granted to Rafael José Serapio Villavicencio (later shortened to Villa), who raised cattle. Rafael's son,



Roberto, continued ranching until the mid-1860s. In 1883, the ranch was acquired by Robert Logan, who in 1901 sold it to Joseph Righetti, a dairyman. In 1912, Righetti sold the property to Armando Storni. The Storni family operated a dairy on the ranch until the mid-1960s.

Chinese Kelp Harvesting

Between 1890 and the mid-1960s, Chinese immigrants harvested kelp along the San Luis Obispo County coast. They burned competing species of seaweed from rocks in the intertidal zone to allow the favored species, *Ulva*, to thrive. The kelp was harvested, dried and shipped to China by way of San Francisco.

Becoming a State Park

An investment firm purchased the Storni Ranch in 1975 for subdivision into home

sites. However, the plans did not materialize; in 2003 the American Land Conservancy bought the acreage and deeded it to California State Parks.

NATURAL HISTORY

Grasslands—Non-native and native grasslands and coastal scrub are the most common vegetation in the park. The San Luis Obispo morning glory, California buttercups, blue-eyed grass, goldfields, owl's clover, yarrow, coyote bush and lupine thrive here.

The flat terraces of the bluffs are dominated by native purple and slender needle grass, melic grass, wild rye and California oatgrass. The steep north- and west-facing bluffs have the largest community of native grasslands and coastal scrub in the park. In spring, wildflowers bloom profusely.

Scrub—Coastal sea bluff scrub—including seaside daisy, California aster, goldenbush, lizard tail, coast buckwheat and sea pink—grow along the terraces, on bluff faces and in other eroded areas. Some shrubs may be dwarfed by the constant wind and salt spray.

Rocky outcrops—Lichen-covered outcrops lie scattered among grasslands and scrub. Ferns, dudleya, Indian paintbrush, miner's lettuce, golden yarrow, California sagebrush and coast buckwheat flourish.

Wetlands—In these low places where water accumulates, plants such as sedges, willows, rushes and aquatic grasses grow in profusion.

Riparian corridors—These waterside areas are home to ferns, willows and cattails.

Ponds—The manmade ponds are fed by rainwater and runoff from surrounding hillsides; they support freshwater marsh habitat with rushes, sedges and willows.

Emergent wetlands—These low-lying areas—wet about half the year—are home to a variety of freshwater marsh and wetland plants, including sedges and rushes.

Wildlife

Sea mammals are a welcome sight and sound along the intertidal areas. Sky-hunting northern harriers swoop down to seize their favorite meal—meadow voles.



Southwestern pond turtle



San Luis Obispo morning glory



Grasslands

Typical grasslands species include California ground squirrels, brush rabbits, skunks, coyote, mule deer, several varieties of mice, raccoons, and, less commonly, badgers.

The endangered California red-legged frog and the southwestern pond turtle, a species of special concern, live in this area. Black-bellied salamanders, Pacific tree frogs, California alligator lizards and California king snakes thrive.

Seabirds, shorebirds, songbirds, raptors, and waterfowl call this place home. Abundant grasslands and rolling terrain bring plentiful small game to attract peregrine falcons and golden eagles. Among sensitive avian species, brown pelicans, double-crested cormorants, white-tailed kites, black oystercatchers, long-billed curlew and Heermann's gulls can be seen.

Climate—Summer is warm and dry with morning fog, and winters are cool and wet. Wind and fog keep temperatures moderate. Dress in layers to accommodate changeable weather.

RECREATION

Harmony Headlands State Park will entice nature lovers, picnickers, photographers, artists and bird watchers. From the parking lot, the one-mile Headland Trail offers panoramic ocean views west to the marine terrace grasslands.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

At this time, there are no accessible features. Accessibility is continually improving. For updates, call the park or visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

PLEASE REMEMBER

- Hours are from 6 a.m. to sunset.
- Dogs, horses or bicycles are not permitted in the park.
- Camping and ground fires are prohibited.
- Ticks are present in the park and can carry Lyme disease. Stay on trails and avoid bushes or grasses where ticks are common.
- Please stay away from sensitive wetlands and pond areas.
- If you encounter a problem, dial 911 for emergencies, or call (805) 772-7434 to reach park staff.

NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Hearst San Simeon SP & SHM
750 Hearst Castle Rd., San Simeon
(805) 927-2035
- Estero Bluffs SP
1 mile south on Hwy. 1
(805) 772-7434
- Cayucos SB
8 miles south on Hwy. 1 in Cayucos
(805) 781-5930



Harmony Headlands State Park

This park receives support in part through the Central Coast Natural History Association
 1320 Van Beurden Dr., Suite 202, Los Osos, CA 93402
www.ccnha.org



Legend

- Major Road
- Paved Road
- Trail
- Creek
- Intermittent Stream
- State Park Boundary
- Parking
- Restroom
- Trailhead



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