

Our Mission

The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation 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.



California State Parks does not discriminate against individuals with disabilities. Prior to arrival, visitors who need assistance should contact the park at the phone number below. To receive this publication in an alternate format, write to the Communications Office at the following address.

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

P. O. Box 942896

Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

For information call: (800) 777-0369

(916) 653-6995, outside the U.S.

711, TTY relay service

www.parks.ca.gov

China Camp State Park

Route 1, Box 244

San Rafael, CA 94901

(415) 456-0766

Cover Photo by Patrick Robards



China Camp State Park

華人
蝦
村



gold. However, other economic opportunities kept them here. China Camp was one of 20 or 30 fishing villages that once dotted the shores of San Francisco and San Pablo Bays. Many residents were from the city of Canton, in the maritime province of Kwantung, China. Fishermen by trade in their native land, they gravitated to the type of work they knew best.

San Pablo Bay provided abundant resources for their trade, and harvesting grass shrimp came to be their specialty. A large percentage of the shrimp netted by these villages was dried on the hillsides behind the camps. It was then shipped to China or to Chinese communities throughout the United States. After the 1880s, the passage of several restrictive laws drastically reduced the productivity of the Chinese fishing community. The most crippling law was passed in 1911 when Chinese bag nets, the only efficient nets then known to shrimpers, were outlawed. Despite all this, a few Chinese fishermen managed to continue fishing for shrimp by developing new techniques.

During the 1880s, nearly 500 people lived in the Chinese fishing village that is now China Camp State Park. There were three general stores, a marine supply store and a barbershop. Now, all that remains of the village are a few buildings along the water's edge, with only fragments of foundations to show where homes and shops once stood.

The history of the Chinese and of their culture in California is an integral part of any thoughtful visit to China Camp State Park. Several historic structures have been preserved, and an informative museum exhibit makes it easy for visitors to imagine a way of life that has been generally forgotten in California history.



Photos by Patrick Robards

Frank Quan, a descendant of one of the early settlers and the village's only resident, still operates a fishing business here. Most of his catch is sold as bait, but if you stop in at the snack bar during the summer, you might ask him whether he has brought in any fresh bay shrimp. Some say it is the best tasting shrimp in the world.

The *Grace Quan* (pictured below), a reproduction of a Chinese junk, is named after Frank Quan's mother. The replica was built in 2003 by the San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park and dedicated volunteers, with support from staff at China Camp State Park. During the summer months, the *Grace Quan* can be viewed at China Camp, and in the winter months at the San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park.



*The Grace Quan
in San Francisco Bay*

Frank Quan bringing in a catch

FACILITIES

Acquired by the State in 1977, China Camp State Park is one of the least disturbed natural watersheds remaining along the shores of San Pablo Bay. A variety of facilities help park visitors enjoy the recreational opportunities available in the park.

Hikers can travel trails along intertidal, salt marsh, meadow and oak habitats, and even encounter some small redwood groves that are home to a variety of wildlife: deer, squirrels, foxes and many kinds of shore and water birds. A number of fishing access spots along North San Pedro Road enable anglers to fish for striped bass, flounder, perch and sturgeon. Check the tide tables. At low tide, the water may be too shallow for fishing.

CAMPING

Camping enthusiasts will find 30 developed campsites (several accessible) located on the northwest side of the park at Back Ranch Meadows Campground amid the peace and quiet of an oak and laurel forest. Each site has a picnic table, food locker and fire ring. Wood gathering is not allowed in the park, but firewood is available for purchase.

Camper must carry their own equipment from the parking lot to the campsites in the walk-in campground some 50 to 300 yards away. Self-contained recreational vehicles may stay for one night (from 6:00 p.m. through 9:00 a.m.) in the parking lot. Access to the campground varies seasonally. Camping reservations can be made up to seven months in advance by calling 1-800-444-PARK (7275). Unreserved sites are available first-come, first-served.

DAY USE

Picnic areas at Buckeye Point, Weber Point, Bullhead Flat and China Camp Point offer scenic shoreline views and accessibility. Each area has a lawn, picnic tables, running water, restrooms and barbecues. Picnicking facilities are also available at China Camp Village,

although barbecuing is not permitted. Open fires are not allowed anywhere in the park.

Visitors usually stop first at the site of the old village. It is the historical center of the park and offers a variety of recreational activities. A small museum exhibit is open daily (10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.) and provides information on the history of China Camp. On sunny days many people spread picnic blankets on the beach, where sunbathing and wading are popular activities. Other activities include swimming, boating, fishing and windsurfing. A concession stand in the village serves cold drinks and food. The stand and the fishing pier are open only on weekends. Local residents are often on hand to tell a fish story or two.

GROUPS

Large groups may be interested in using the reservable day-use facility at Miwok Meadows. Located in an open meadow and oak and laurel woodland, it can accommodate up to 200 people. Also provided are picnic tables, barbecues, volleyball standards, horseshoe pits and chemical toilets, one of which is accessible. Water is not available at Miwok Meadows. Smaller groups (up to 50 people) can reserve Weber Point and Buckeye Point where water is available. Call (415) 456-0766 to reserve these sites.



China Camp State Park is located on the southwest shore of San Pablo Bay, three miles from downtown San Rafael in Marin County. The park is easily reached from Highway 101, a thirty-minute drive from San Francisco by way of the Golden Gate Bridge.

The 1,512-acre park has a variety of natural scenery and some fine trails along San Pedro Ridge. Magnificent panoramic views of the north bay area include San Pablo Bay, the north bay counties of Napa, Solano and Sonoma, the East Bay Hills, Mount Diablo, Angel Island, the San Francisco Peninsula and Mount Tamalpais.

Maritime influences result in a pleasant and moderate climate at China Camp, while high ridges to the west protect the park from the fog that often moves in from the ocean to cover the San Francisco Bay Area. Consequently, China Camp enjoys some of the best weather in the Bay Area—more than two hundred fog-free days per year.

Popular activities at China Camp include hiking, biking, horseback riding, picnicking, camping, boating, fishing, swimming and windsurfing. The human history of this area adds still another dimension to the park. China Camp Village is especially interesting to artists and photographers.

HISTORY

Point San Pedro was originally part of the Coast Miwok territory. These California Indians hunted small animals and deer, collected acorns, and gathered marsh plants and shellfish. They made baskets and disk beads from clamshells, and traded them for such locally unobtainable resources as high-grade obsidian from Lake County tribes. Their village site typically consisted of ten or twelve households, with eight to ten individuals living in each. The remains of numerous sites have been found in the park.

Houses were built of grass and tule thatching over a dome framework of light poles. Larger settlements often had sweatshouses and dance houses. Sir Francis

Drake, after his initial contact with the Indians in 1579, described them as being peaceful and of a loving nature. In 1775 Father Vicente Santa Maria confirmed Drake's observation and added that the Indians were both friendly and physically healthy.

The establishment of the San Francisco Mission in 1776, and its sister mission San Rafael Archangel in 1817, had a profound effect on the Coast Miwok of the area. Many factors played a tragic role in the decline of the population. Diseases and hardships introduced by Europeans drastically reduced the Coast Miwok population. Estimated at approximately 2,000 in earlier times, there remained very few individuals by 1900.

The area within today's park became part of a large land grant held by Timoteo Murphy—the Rancho San Pedro, Santa Margarita y las Gallinas. Murphy held the grant until his death in the early 1850s, when it was divided and sold. The McNear family owned part of the property that is now China Camp State Park until the mid-1900s. They ran a dairy and leased major portions of land for grazing. Some features of this era, such as cisterns, may still be seen in secluded areas of the park. The era is memorialized by the naming of Back Ranch Meadows Campground.



Rat Rock Cove looking south (ca early 1900s)

THE CHINESE

A significant era began for China Camp in the mid-1860s when the Chinese immigrants began shrimp fishing. The Chinese, like many other immigrant groups, came to California with the prospect of mining

San Pablo Bay

NOTE: Fragile salt marsh areas require study permits from California State Parks.



Attention Trail Users
 China Camp State Park has a Multiple Use Trail System. Other than trails marked with small green dashes (-----), all official park trails shown on this map are open to hikers, bicyclists and equestrians. Be courteous to other trail users, yielding the right-of-way when appropriate.

PLEASE REMEMBER

- Dogs are allowed in developed areas only and are not allowed on trails. Dogs must always be on a leash (not to exceed 6 feet) and under control.
- You may have fires only in park barbecues in designated areas.
- State park rules are strictly enforced at China Camp in order to protect this unique natural and historic resource. For further information, please feel free to contact the staff at park headquarters across from the Bullhead Flat picnic area.
- Ride on official park trails only.
- Dogs are not allowed on trails, and park trails are closed after sunset.

Photo by Patrick Robards



Aerial view of China Camp

Photo by Patrick Robards



China Camp pier



Lion dancers blessing the Chinese Junk Grace Quan on its launch day