

# D.L. Bliss Emerald Bay State Parks



## 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.



California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should **contact the parks' office at (530) 525-3345**. If you need this publication in an alternate format, call (916) 654-2249 or contact [interp@parks.ca.gov](mailto:interp@parks.ca.gov).

### CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

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Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

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### D.L. Bliss and Emerald Bay State Parks

Hwy. 89/P.O. Box 266, Tahoma, CA 96142

D.L. Bliss (530) 525-7277

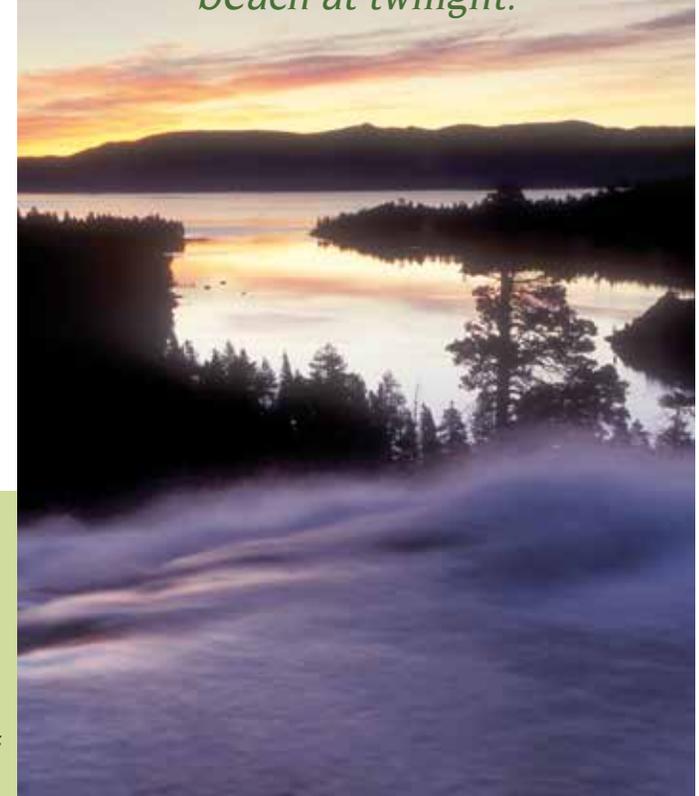
Emerald Bay (530) 541-3030 (summer only)

Lake Sector Headquarters (530) 525-3345

Cover, back panel and Eagle Falls photographs courtesy of Ron Maertz

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*Delight your senses—  
inhale a Jeffrey pine's  
vanilla-scented bark,  
feel lake water chill your  
toes, taste a grilled trout,  
hear a breeze rustle  
through the pines,  
and watch bats buzz the  
beach at twilight.*

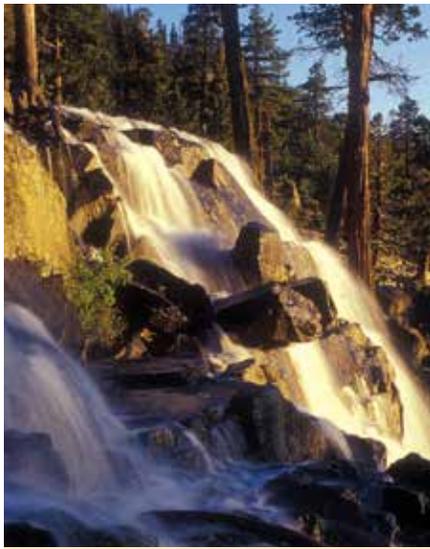


## D. L. Bliss and Emerald Bay

**State Parks** include more than six miles of magnificent Lake Tahoe's west shore, covering 1,830 acres in California's Sierra Nevada. From the scenic overlook on Highway 89, you can see a brilliant panorama of Emerald Bay, Fannette Island, Lake Tahoe and the distant Nevada shore. Nearby Eagle Creek cascades over three falls and disappears into the lake.

D.L. Bliss State Park is named for a pioneering lumberman, railroad owner and banker from the region. The Bliss family donated 744 acres to the California State Park System in 1929.

The nucleus of Emerald Bay State Park, including Vikingsholm, was sold to the State for half the appraised value by Placerville lumberman Harvey West in 1953. The Save the Redwoods League helped raise funds to acquire the land. Emerald Bay was



*Eagle Falls*

designated a National Natural Landmark by the U.S. Department of Interior in 1969.

Summer temperatures at Tahoe range from about 75 degrees during the day to the low 40s at night. Winter temperatures average from a high of 40 to a low of 20 degrees. Depending on the weather, the parks are open from late May through September and

are closed during the winter. Heavy Sierra snowfall closes Highway 89 in winter.

### **PARK HISTORY**

#### **Native People**

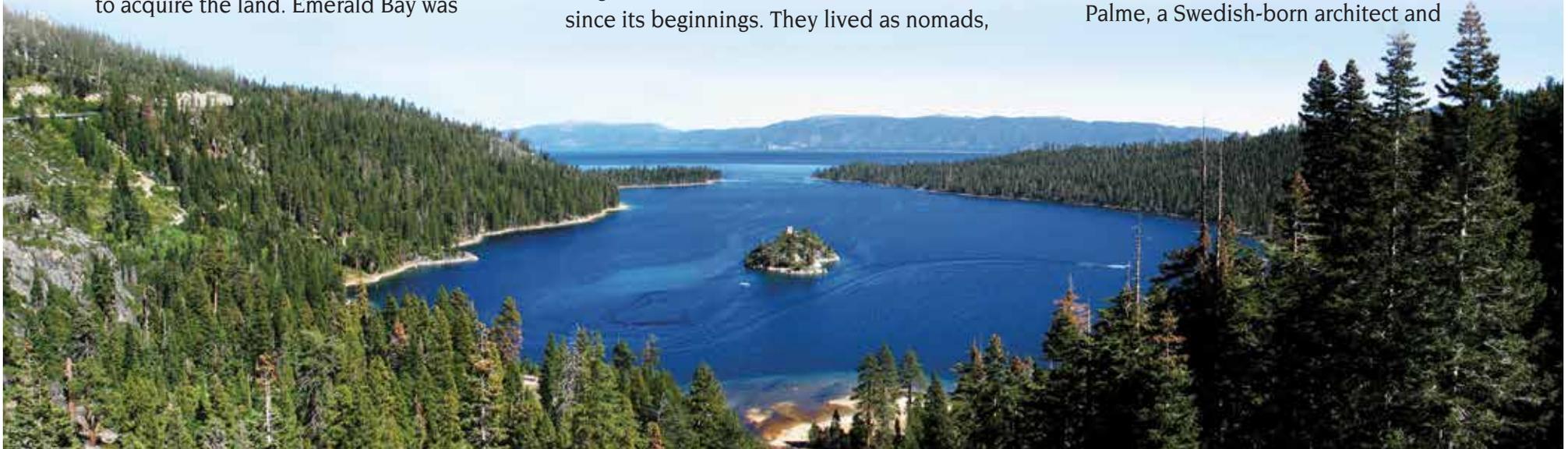
The Washoe (aboriginal *Wašiw*) natives were the first humans to inhabit the Lake Tahoe basin and the nearby Sierra Nevada range. Washoe have lived in the Tahoe basin since its beginnings. They lived as nomads,

hunting, fishing and gathering seasonal food. The natives moved from near the lake they called *da ow a ga* to the lowland Great Basin valleys east of the Sierra for the winter. Between 1848 and 1862, the Washoe people's estimated 10,000 square miles of lakeside and surrounding land were taken during the gold and silver rushes. New settlers logged off the Sierra range to construct mines and dwellings.

The natives' descendants, the Washoe Tribe of California and Nevada, are now trying to reclaim portions of their land. Tribe members run the Meeks Bay resort campground and concession north of D.L. Bliss State Park. The Washoe are reviving their native language and teaching it to preschoolers, while pursuing traditional arts like basketry, dancing and drumming.

#### **Vikingsholm**

In 1928, Mrs. Lora J. Knight of Santa Barbara purchased this isolated site at the head of Emerald Bay. Knight instructed Lennart Palme, a Swedish-born architect and





*The Vikingsholm tour includes the restored summer lodge and interior rooms and concludes with a visit to the sod-roofed garage and carport.*

her nephew by marriage, to design a home for her. Following a trip to Scandinavia, the two decided to use elements found in Norwegian farmsteads and wooden stave churches, without disturbing a single one of the Emerald Bay site's magnificent trees.

Vikingsholm's construction methods and materials, including granite boulders in the foundations and walls, are the same as those used in ancient Scandinavia. Towers, intricate carvings and hand-hewn timbers were used to create the castle-like home. The sod roofs, with their living grass and flowers, are copied from sites in Norway. Many of the furnishings that Mrs. Knight wanted for Vikingsholm were so historically significant that their export was forbidden by the Norwegian and Swedish governments. She had authentic furnishings duplicated in detail, down to the measurements, colorations and aging of the wood. Vikingsholm was completed in September 1929. Mrs. Knight spent her summers at the home until her death in 1945.

You can take a guided tour of Vikingsholm, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, for a nominal fee from Memorial Day through September. The building is about a mile down a steep pedestrian trail from the parking lot at the Emerald Bay Overlook. Call the D.L. Bliss office in advance at (530) 525-9529 for information about accessibility at Vikingsholm.

### **Fannette Island**

Emerald Bay's Fannette Island is the only island in Lake Tahoe. A sparsely timbered, brush-covered upthrust of granite that rises

150 feet above the water, Fannette Island was not always known by that name. During the past 100 years, it was known as Coquette Island, Baranoff Island, Dead Man's Island, Hermit's Island, and Emerald Isle.

Captain Dick Barter, "the Hermit of Emerald Bay," lived on Dead Man's Island from 1863 to 1873. He built his own wooden chapel and tomb above the high-water line of the island. In 1873, the captain's boat was found wrecked at Rubicon Point above deep water; his body was never recovered.

In 1929, Lora Knight had a stone tea house, resembling a miniature castle, built on Fannette Island. Mrs. Knight and her guests would take a motorboat to have tea on the island. The tea house had a small corner fireplace with a large oak table and four oak chairs. Vandalism has taken its toll; only the stone shell remains.

From February 1 through June 15, the island is closed to all visitors while Canada geese nest there. By late spring, visitors can see whole families of geese swimming near the Vikingsholm shore.



*Underwater park, Emerald Bay*

## Underwater Park

Emerald Bay, long recognized for its spectacular natural beauty, was formed from steep Sierra cliffs that plunge into the narrow bay. The underwater park extends around the entrance to the bay and includes Rubicon, Emerald and Eagle Points.

Archaeological data from the 1930s indicates that this prehistoric site includes bedrock mortars, six known shipwrecks and eight other vessels reported to have been lost in the underwater area.

As California's first underwater shipwreck park, Emerald Bay's underwater state park was officially opened to the public in September 1994. Wooden cargo barges, constructed of massive Ponderosa pine timbers, can be located by a historic site marker buoy on the surface; underwater, the barges are marked with a monument. The historic former site of Kirby's Emerald Bay Resort, now the park's boat camp, has four small craft sunk at their moorings: a skiff, a metal hourglass-stern rowboat, a kayak and a wooden rowboat.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

The grandeur of the parks and their setting came from successive upheavals of the mountain-building processes that raised the Sierra Nevada. Lake Tahoe (from an Indian word interpreted to mean "edge of the lake") lies east of the main Sierra crest at more than 6,200 feet elevation. After the mountains rose to the east and west, the lake's basin was completed by glaciers, massive landslides, and lava seeping from volcanic vents, especially to the north.

Emerald Bay was gouged out by glaciers thousands of years ago; the points at the bay's entrance are terminal glacial moraines. Geologists believe that the granite of Fannette Island resisted the glacial ice. The lake is over 22 miles long, 12 miles wide and more than 1,600 feet deep. You can see approximately 70 feet into its depths from promontories such as Rubicon Point. The lake level is controlled by a small dam on the Truckee River at Tahoe City. More than 60 streams feed water into the lake, but the Truckee River is the only outflow.

The Lake Tahoe area has a wide variety of trees and plants. Majestic sugar pines grow on the thin granitic soil of D.L. Bliss. The parks also contain ponderosa and Jeffrey pines, incense cedar, Sierra juniper and black cottonwood. Along the streams grow quaking aspen, alder, willow, mountain



*Recreational opportunities include camping, hiking, swimming, boating, fishing and nature viewing in a spectacular environment.*

dogwood, service berry and bitter cherry. Wildflowers—columbine, leopard lily, bleeding heart, yellow monkey flower—bloom in season. Chipmunks and Steller's jays feed and hide among ceanothus, chinquapin, currant, gooseberry, huckleberry and manzanita. Lucky visitors may spot a bald eagle or osprey fishing.



*Monkey flower*





Lakeview campsite

## RECREATION

### Camping, Water Sports & Hiking

The parks have more than 250 family campsites, each with a table, food locker and stove, plus nearby restrooms and hot showers. Although there are no hookups, some sites at D.L. Bliss will accommodate trailers up to 15 feet or motor homes up to 18 feet. Emerald Bay can accommodate trailers up to 18 feet or motorhomes up to 21 feet. The D.L. Bliss group campground will accommodate up to 50 people, with a limit of 10 cars. Reserve all campsites by calling (800) 444-7275 or visit [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov).

Twenty primitive campsites are reachable by boat. While the parks themselves have no launching facilities, boats can be launched from private facilities about 6 miles to the north or south. Scuba diving is allowed in the underwater park.

Visitors can swim at D.L. Bliss State Park's Lester and Calawee Cove beaches. **Jumping or diving from shore or rocks is prohibited.**

Fish for rainbow, brown and Mackinaw trout or Kokanee salmon (a landlocked form of the Pacific sockeye)—all successfully introduced into the lake. All anglers aged 16 and over must carry a valid California fishing license. For more information, visit [www.wildlife.ca.gov](http://www.wildlife.ca.gov).

During the summer, interpretive programs and activities are scheduled.

The Rubicon Trail for hikers follows the scenic lakeshore from Calawee Cove at D.L. Bliss past Vikingsholm to Upper Eagle Point Campground at Emerald Bay. The trail crosses the lower cascades of Eagle Creek and Eagle Falls.

### ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

Parking and restrooms at D.L. Bliss are barrier-free; tour

videotapes and visual guides are available at the visitor centers. Both parks have some wheelchair-accessible campsites. Accessibility is continually improving; for updates, visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

## BEAR ENCOUNTERS

### Never approach a bear!

The American “black bears” that inhabit the Tahoe region may be colored black, brown, cinnamon, or even blonde. Strict regulations protect the bears and can reduce encounters between humans and bears.

- Bear-resistant food storage facilities are available at park campgrounds. Cars and coolers are not bear-proof.
- All food and refuse, when not actively being used or transported, must be stored in the bear-resistant facilities provided.



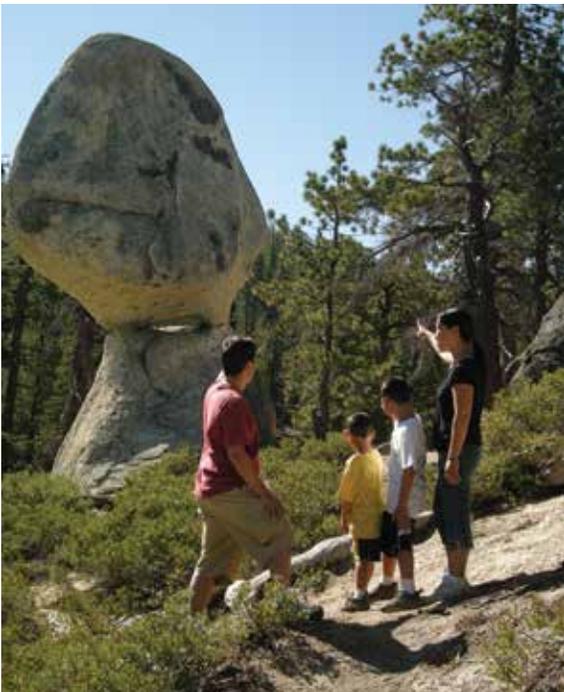
Black bear

- Do not store scented items—food, toiletries or refuse—in vehicles in campgrounds or day-use areas.
- Food and refuse that cannot be stored in bear-resistant facilities provided must be discarded in a bear-proof dumpster.
- If you see a bear in the campground, do not run. Be aggressive; assert your dominance by standing tall and making loud noises to scare the bear away.

- In the woods, respect the bear's territory. Make eye contact, but don't stare. Pick up small children. Make yourself appear as large as possible. Stay calm and quiet; back away slowly. Bears will often climb a tree if frightened and usually won't come down as long as humans or leashed dogs are present.

### NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Tahoe State Recreation Area,  
1/4 mile east of Tahoe City on Hwy. 28  
(530) 525-3345
- Ed Z'berg Sugar Pine Point State Park,  
10 miles south of Tahoe City on Hwy. 89  
(530) 525-3345
- Kings Beach State Recreation Area,  
Hwy. 267, Kings Beach on Hwy. 89  
(530) 583-3074



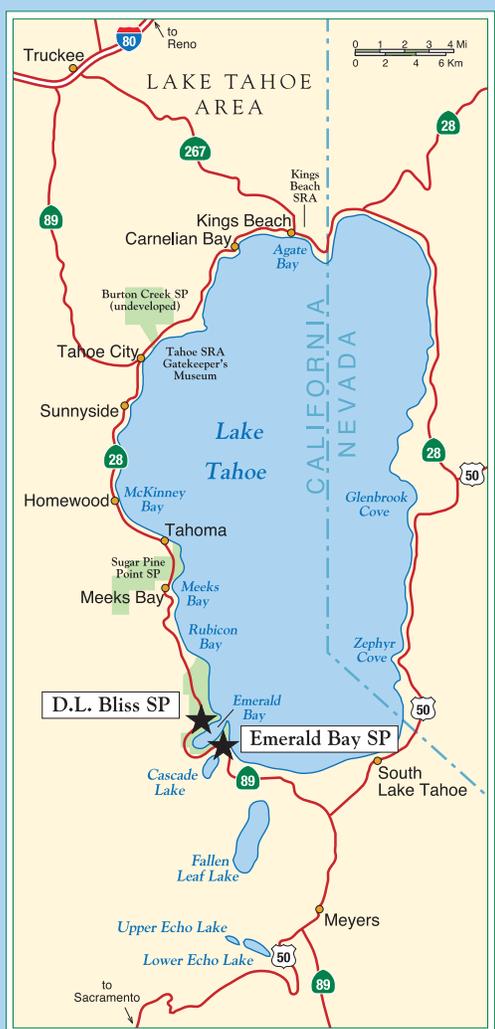
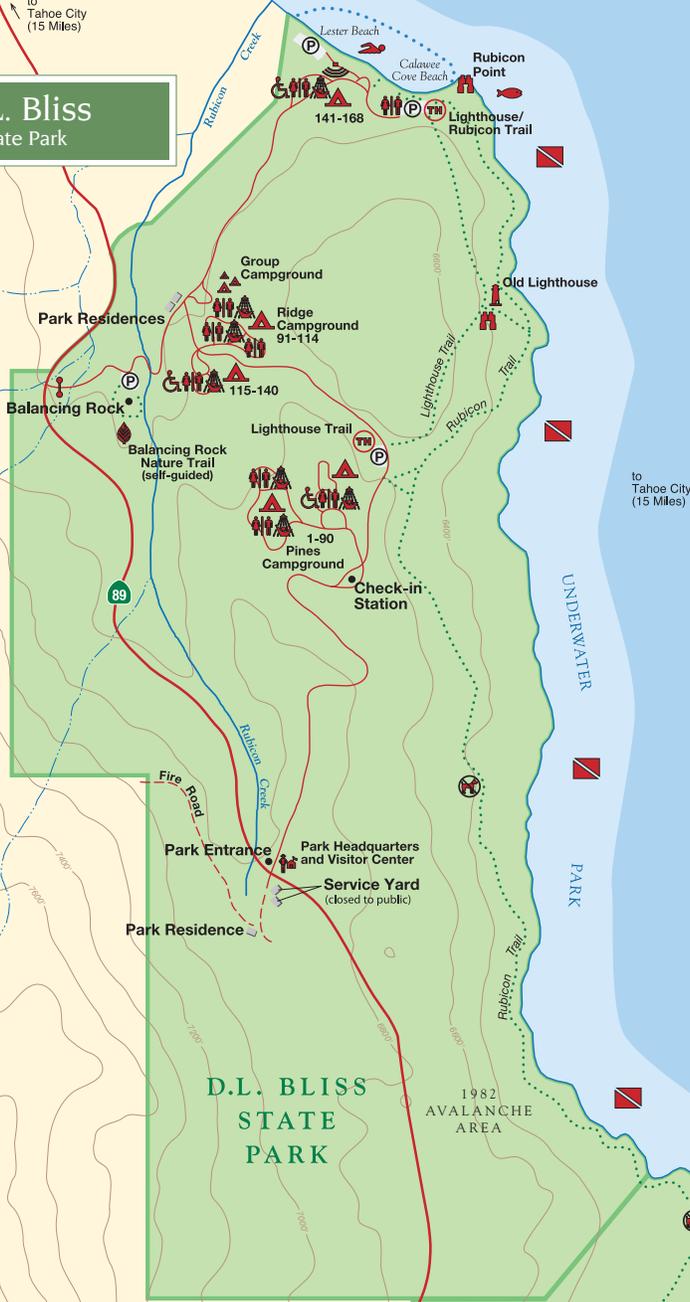
*D.L. Bliss visitors at Balancing Rock*

### PLEASE REMEMBER

- Hikers must stay on marked trails.
- Smoking is prohibited on trails because of fire danger.
- Campfires must be confined to fire rings and stoves provided. Do not gather dead wood that is recycling back to the earth. Camp hosts have firewood for sale.
- All natural and cultural features are protected by law and should not be disturbed, altered or removed.
- Dogs are allowed in the parks. They must be kept on a six-foot-maximum leash during the day and in an enclosed vehicle or tent at night. Only trained service animals are permitted on the trails, on beaches or in the Vikingsholm area. Clean up after pets.
- Jumping and diving into the water from rocks or shore are not permitted throughout the State Park System.

This park receives support in part through a nonprofit organization. For information contact Sierra State Parks Foundation  
351 North Lake Tahoe Blvd.  
P.O. Box 28, Tahoe City, CA 96145  
[www.sierrastateparks.org](http://www.sierrastateparks.org)

# D.L. Bliss State Park



# Emerald Bay State Park



### Legend

	Major Road
	Paved road
	Unpaved road
	Hiking Trail
	Underwater Park
	Accessible Feature
	Campfire Center
	Campground
	14-50 Campsites
	Diving
	Fishing
	Group Campground
	Group Picnic Area
	Lighthouse
	Locked Gate
	Nature Trail
	No Dogs Allowed
	Park Building
	Park Headquarters
	Parking
	Restrooms
	Showers
	Swimming
	Trailhead
	Viewpoint
	Waterfall

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Map by Eureka Cartography, Berkeley, CA