

Asilomar State Beach & Conference Grounds



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.



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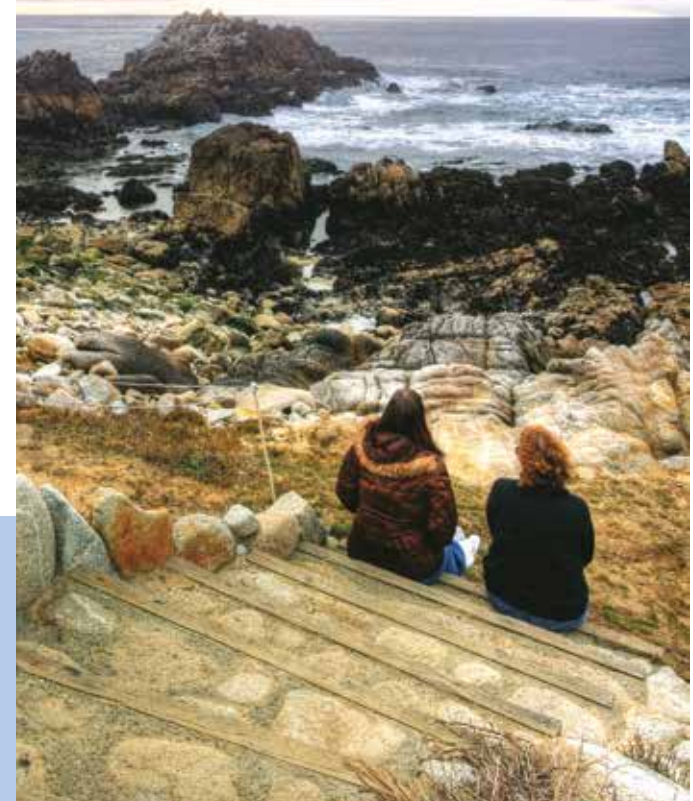
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*The open beach gives
way to a rocky shoreline
that shelters several small
sandy coves—perfect for
exploring tide pools or
watching wildlife.*



Asilomar, meaning “refuge by the sea,” offers park visitors the chance to explore the natural beauty of this coastal California state park and to learn of its colorful history. Originally the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) conference grounds and summer camp, Asilomar was designed by renowned California architect Julia Morgan.

From its beginning, Asilomar has served as a haven for those who wish to escape the pressures of an increasingly fast-paced world. Enhanced by the facility’s natural beauty, Asilomar offers a peaceful oasis for educational and spiritual retreats, where individuals and families may spend quiet, relaxing times, surrounded by nature.

PARK HISTORY

The Rumsien Ohlone Indians and their predecessors lived in the Monterey region for thousands of years prior to European arrival. The Rumsien were seasonal visitors, spending summers at the shore and retreating inland for harvest and winter months.

The Rumsien way of life changed dramatically in the late 1700s with the arrival of settlers from Spain, who claimed the land for their home country. Spanish missionaries sought to convert native peoples, forcing European religion and ways of life upon them; many were conscripted as laborers on Spanish, and later, Mexican ranches.

Descendants of the early Indian residents still come to the Asilomar coast to gather shells for regalia for their traditional dances



*The Grace H. Dodge Chapel
designed by architect Julia Morgan*

and ceremonies. Collecting is allowed by special permit only.

The 1848 California gold discovery brought thousands of new residents from countries around the world to settle in the state. Chinese immigrants established fishing villages along the Monterey coast; Portuguese settlers hunted whales in the vast Monterey Bay.

Starting in 1897, the YWCA attended educational and vocational training at their annual summer conference camps. In 1913, on 30 acres of donated land, Asilomar was established as the YWCA’s permanent West Coast conference grounds. Architect Julia Morgan was hired to design and oversee the construction of 13 structures that embraced the Arts and Crafts style and matched the spirit of the project to the beauty of the surroundings.

When Asilomar first opened its doors, young women came from the western United States and from other countries. YWCA

Student Leadership Conferences drew college-age women, while the ten-day summer camps were designed for YWCA Girl Reserves, ages 14 to 16.

The harsh economic times of the Great Depression caused the YWCA National Board to consider selling Asilomar. When no buyer stepped forward, successive operators leased the grounds from 1936 through the early 1940s. Following World War II, public-spirited citizens fought to preserve this unique natural and cultural site for future generations. Asilomar became part of California’s State Park System on July 1, 1956.

Today Asilomar State Beach and Conference Grounds encompass 107 acres, including the William Penn Mott Jr. Training Center, the hub of State Parks’ employee training. Guest services at the conference grounds are provided by a leading hospitality industry concession partner.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Asilomar Dunes Natural Preserve

Adjacent to the grounds, 25 acres of restored sand dunes provide a significant ecological boundary between the shoreline and the coniferous forest.

The dunes had been heavily compromised due to more than a century of livestock grazing, recreational activities, and uncontrolled public access.



Julia Morgan, ca. 1926

*Photo courtesy of Special Collections and Archives,
California Polytechnic State University*

Restoration began with eradication of the non-native ice plant. Dunes were bulldozed into a series of parallel ridges, reconstructing dune morphology. More than 20 species of native plants were planted in stabilizing mulch. A quarter-mile Dunes Boardwalk was built to guide visitors through the dunes without damaging the fragile ecosystem. The area has been classified as Asilomar Dunes Natural Preserve, allowing life in the dunes habitat to flourish for years to come.

Asilomar State Beach

The one-mile Asilomar Coast Trail provides park visitors easy walking and the opportunity to explore the treasures of Asilomar State Beach. The trailhead lies north of and adjacent to the flat, sandy strip of Asilomar State Beach. The trail meanders above rocky coves sculpted from granodiorite rocks. Visitors often see harbor seals resting on rocks at low tide and sea otters swimming and feeding beyond the breaking waves.

The coastline at Asilomar State Beach is a State Marine Reserve, part of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. As with all of California's statewide network of marine protected areas (MPAs), it is a designated "no take" zone—no collecting of living, geological, or cultural resources is allowed.

Asilomar's Pine Forest

Asilomar's native Monterey pine forest is an ancient, complex ecosystem found only in three Central Coast areas—the Monterey Peninsula, Año Nuevo, and Cambria.



Deer abound in the forest.

Forest management strategies at Asilomar emphasize long-term forest ecosystem health that includes not just the trees but the animals, the air, the soil, the plants, even the microorganisms that together weave a delicately balanced web of life.

Deer, squirrels, and raccoons are frequently sighted. Acorn woodpeckers with bright black, red, and white feathers flash about the forest canopy, while red-shouldered hawks soar from treetop to treetop. Dark-eyed juncos trill melodious songs from their perches in the forest.

RECREATION

Park staff provide a variety of cultural and natural history walks. Several self-guided walking tours, as well as a mobile phone tour brochure, are available at the California State Parks desk located inside the Hearst Social Hall. Visit www.parks.ca.gov/asilomar for current guided-tour times.

Visitors can spend their leisure time bird watching, strolling along the beach, bicycling, swimming in the heated pool, or playing a game of billiards, ping pong, or volleyball.

PLEASE REMEMBER

- Stay on paved areas, boardwalks, and trails to conserve natural habitat areas.
- Do not collect or disturb animals or plants on the beach or in the tide pools.
- No campfires are allowed on the beach.
- Dogs must be attended and on a six-foot leash at all times.
- Park only in designated parking spaces.
- The maximum speed limit is 10 mph.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

The Dunes Boardwalk and parts of the Coast Trail and trail parking are accessible. A free beach wheelchair and walker may be reserved at (831) 372-8016. TTY for guest use is available at Asilomar's front desk. Dial 711 for TTY relay. All parking lots have accessible spaces. All lodges are accessible; each has an accessible room. Pool has a lift.

Accessibility is continually improving. For updates, visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Asilomar's concession partner offers a full-service, year-round facility that includes meeting rooms, lodging, on-site dining, and catering available for special events.












Meeting rooms range from a 650-seat lecture hall to an intimate gathering space for 10 individuals. More than 300 guest rooms each have private baths; several feature fireplaces or private decks.

Both conference and leisure guests are welcome. For all group and individual reservations, see www.visitasilomar.com or call (888) 635-5310.

Asilomar

State Beach and Conference Grounds

Legend

-  Paved Road
-  Trail: Accessible
-  Trail
-  Sand Dunes
-  State Marine Reserve
-  Historic Building
-  Park Building
-  Accessible Feature
-  Parking
-  Ranger Station
-  Restrooms
-  Swimming

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