Walk among Fort Tejon's buildings, sites, and ruins. Imagine the lives of the soldiers and civilians, and understand the struggles of early life in California.

Fort Tejon State Historic Park
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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 park at (661) 248-6692. If you need this publication in an alternate format, contact interp@parks.ca.gov.

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Because the animals were in poor condition and expensive to feed, the camel herd was transferred after less than a year to the Los Angeles Quartermaster Depot. There they were used in a failed experiment to cut the expense of messenger service between Los Angeles and Fort Mojave. The animals were then moved to the Benicia Army Arsenal and eventually sold at auction.

The Camel Experiment
During the late 1850s, the U.S. Army experimented with camels, hoping to improve transport across the arid west; in 1859 camels were brought to Fort Tejon, where the Army took charge of them.
With the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, the dragoons were sent to guard Los Angeles and later transferred east to fight in the war. In the summer of 1862, violence erupted between the encroaching white settlers and the Owens Valley Paiute, who wanted to protect their lands. Three cavalry companies of California Volunteers forcibly moved the Paiute to the Sebastian Reservation, but the authorities there refused to accept responsibility for them. In 1863, several hundred of these Indians were brought to Fort Tejon, which was then being used by the California Volunteers. With little or no food, clothing, or other support, the Indians' ranks were thinned by disease, starvation, and desertion until the summer of 1864, when they were transferred to the Tule River Indian Reservation. That year the U.S. Army closed Fort Tejon, formally ending its career as an active military post.

**FORT TEJON TODAY**

In 1940, through the persuasive efforts of Kern County citizens, the Tejon Ranch Company deeded five acres—the fort's parade ground, the foundations, and remnants of the original adobe buildings—to the State of California as a state park. Restoration began on the adobe buildings in 1947 and continues to this day. The original barracks building, the reconstructed officers' quarters, and various other structures stand as reminders of Fort Tejon's military history.

**NATURAL HISTORY**

The plant and animal life here is unique, due to the park's geographical location at the confluence of several ecological regions, including the Mojave Desert, the Central Valley, the Sierra Nevada, and Southern California. The natural vegetation is dominated by oak woodlands that provide forage and shelter for a variety of wildlife, including the endangered California condors, scrub jays, and red-shafted flickers who feed on acorns.

The presence of a year-round creek in an otherwise arid climate attracts many animals to the park. The riparian woodland and freshwater marsh along Grapevine Creek are home to myriad birds and reptiles. Almost all of the mammals found in the area—including blacktailed deer, blacktailed hare, Beechey ground squirrels, bobcats, badgers, and opossum—frequent these wetlands during the summer for water.

The park's meadows and grasslands are home to insects, seed-eating birds, and small mammals. As a result, the area is fertile hunting ground for raptors, coyotes, and gray foxes.

The land the park sits on is highly active geologically. This area experienced one of the greatest earthquakes ever recorded in U.S. history. In 1857, an earthquake of approximately 7.9 to 8.2 magnitude struck here along the San Andreas Fault, leaving an amazing surface-rupture scar more than 220 miles long.

**ACCESSIBLE FEATURES**

Various buildings and exhibits, including the visitor center, officers' quarters, picnic tables, restrooms, and parking near the visitor center/park office are all accessible. An interpretive trail around the historic grounds is generally accessible. Accessibility is continually improving. For updates, visit [http://access.parks.ca.gov](http://access.parks.ca.gov) or call the park.

**PLEASE REMEMBER**

- The park is open daily from sunrise to sunset. The visitor center and historic buildings are open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- The park is closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.
- Contact the park for information on scheduled Living History demonstrations.
- State law prohibits disturbing or removing any natural, cultural, or historic features in the park.
- Stay on designated trails or mowed areas.
- The park has no designated hiking or bicycle trails.
- Do not drive off designated roads.
- Pets must be kept on a leash.