

# Refugio State Beach



## Our Mission

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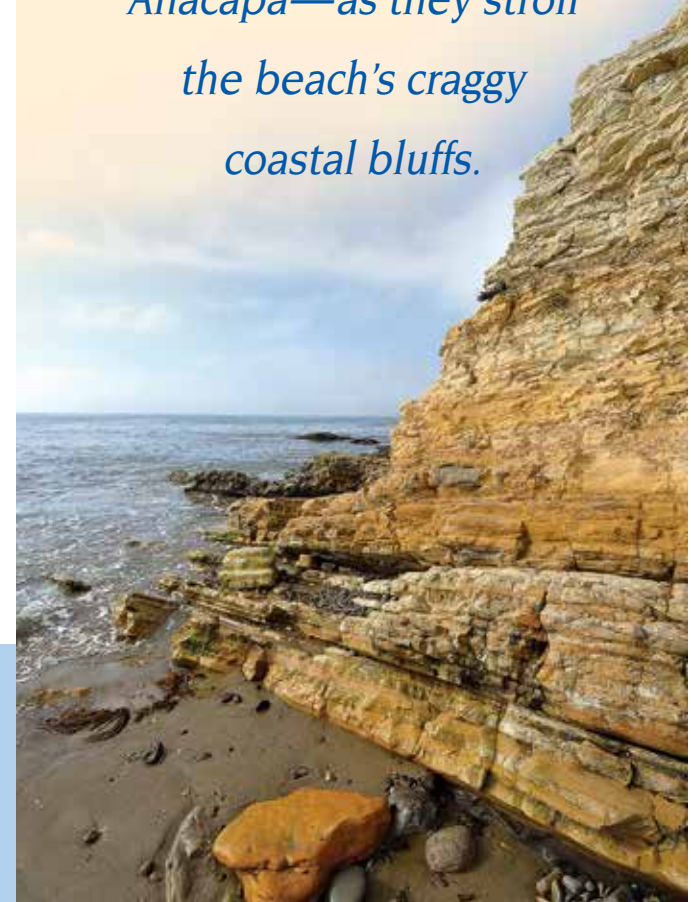
### Refugio State Beach

10 Refugio Beach Road

Goleta, CA 93117

(805) 968-1033

*On clear days, visitors to Refugio State Beach enjoy matchless views of four offshore islands—San Miguel, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz, and Anacapa—as they stroll the beach's craggy coastal bluffs.*



**At Refugio State Beach, 22 miles west of Santa Barbara, fan and date palms decorate a crescent-shaped curve of sand.**

This is a quiet place to build sand castles, surf, dive, stroll the trails, watch wildlife, pitch a tent, and cast a fishing pole.

From the hills above the beach, Refugio Creek makes its way to the ocean. The Santa Ynez Mountains, part of Los Padres National Forest, dominate the scenery.

### **PARK HISTORY**

#### **The Native People**

The native Chumash people originally lived in this area. The Chumash territory generally extended from today's San Luis Obispo south to Malibu. Three villages, likely occupied at different times, surrounded Refugio Bay. The most recent of these, according to mission records, was named *Kasil*, translated as "pretty place."

Refugio Bay was a port of trade between Chumash people on Santa Cruz Island and the inland village of *Soxtonokmu* in the Santa Ynez Valley. The lagoon would have provided a wealth of resources from the sea, obtained via the *tomol* (redwood plank canoe). The surrounding marshes provided willows and tules for construction of the traditional Chumash house or *ap*. Despite the widespread decimation of the native population from disease, violence, and starvation after Spanish arrival, many Chumash people have maintained important cultural traditions for current and future generations.



*Kayakers' paradise*

#### **Spanish Explorers and French Pirates**

In the 1790s, José Francisco Ortega was awarded the first land grant on the Santa Barbara coast, the 26,529-acre Nuestra Señora del Refugio. He raised cattle there.

The Spanish monarchy that governed Alta California at that time forbade any trade with non-Spanish ships or countries, considering this smuggling. When Ortega's son, José María, inherited the rancho, he began trading cowhides, leather, and tallow with foreign ships rather than waiting months for Spanish goods that did not always arrive.

In 1818, notorious French pirate Hippolyte Bouchard learned of Ortega's wealth and set out to raid Refugio. However, the residents—warned about Bouchard's intentions—fled inland to hide their valuables. In the end, Bouchard burned Ortega's adobe home and cattle station and destroyed his livestock, but he left Refugio empty-handed.

#### **Rancho Nuestra Señora del Refugio**

Like many large Alta California land grantees, the Ortegas sold off pieces

of Rancho Nuestra Señora del Refugio to non-family members between 1858 and 1889. The remaining grassy portion was used mostly for cattle ranching.

Scottish émigrés Nelson and J. Monroe Rutherford bought 500 beachside acres in the early 20th century, opening a private resort called Refugio Cove and Beach. Their beach resort had rental cabins, campsites, an arbor, a children's pool, and a small camp store. The State of California bought Refugio from Rutherford descendants in 1950. In 1963, it was classified a state beach.

### **GEOLOGY**

Four geologic types make up the land at Refugio State Beach: Rincon formation (brown-gray clay marine shale); Monterey formation (an oil-producing formation of shales and limestone); terrace deposits (often containing fossil material, though none has been found here); and alluvium (soils and rock—the youngest deposit of the four types).

*A neat row of non-native palms lines the shore.*







Photo courtesy of Jean Bjerke

*Long-billed curlews*

Situated between the south branch of the Santa Ynez and the Arroyo Parida ground faults, Refugio is also affected by several offshore geologic faults.

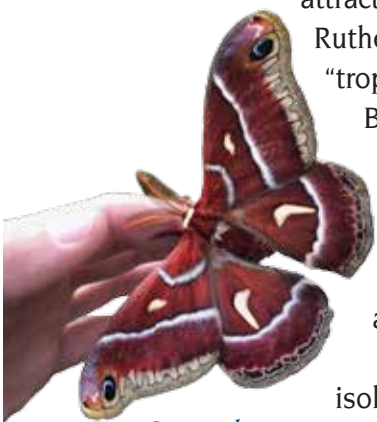
### NATURAL HISTORY

The mostly landscaped park had little native vegetation after Ortega's cattle grazed here. Between the late 1920s and 1950, then-owners the Rutherford brothers planted the neat row of stately palm trees along the shore. Now part of the park's historical landscaping, the palms were intended to

attract tourists to what the Rutherfords called their "tropical paradise."

Bird species found in the park include yellow-rumped warblers, black phoebes, and acorn woodpeckers.

Birds found among isolated patches



*Ceanothus silk moth*

of coastal sage scrub include the bushtit, California towhee, and wren-tit.

Such water birds as willets, marbled godwits, whimbrels, killdeer, and occasionally, long-billed curlews feed on the shoreline. The lagoon is home to mallards, coots, black-crowned night herons, and various gulls and terns.

Coast sunflowers lure ceanothus silk moths. Abundant rodents include the deer mouse and California pocket mouse. Other mammals include California voles and Audubon's cottontails.

### Refugio Today

What was once part of a grand rancho is now simply Refugio State Beach. The beach is easy to access from parking lots. With its smooth, shallow depths, this area is a preferred location for students seeking their open-water scuba diving certification.

### RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

**Camping**—A 66-site family campground and three group sites are close to the beach. There are no RV hookups. Observe quiet hours. Reserve campsites well in advance at [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov) or call (800) 444-7275.

**Trails**—A portion of the 2.5-mile Aniso Trail (part of the California Coastal Trail) between Refugio and El Capitan State Beaches is closed for storm repairs. Call (805) 968-1033 Tuesday through Friday for trail updates.

**The beach**—This narrow beach is near many campsites, and it invites visitors to swim, fish, kayak, scuba dive, and surf the waves.

### ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

Accessible features include fairly level unpaved campsites, restrooms, and a blufftop bike trail/walkway with views of the Channel Islands. To reserve a beach wheelchair, call (805) 968-3834 M-F.

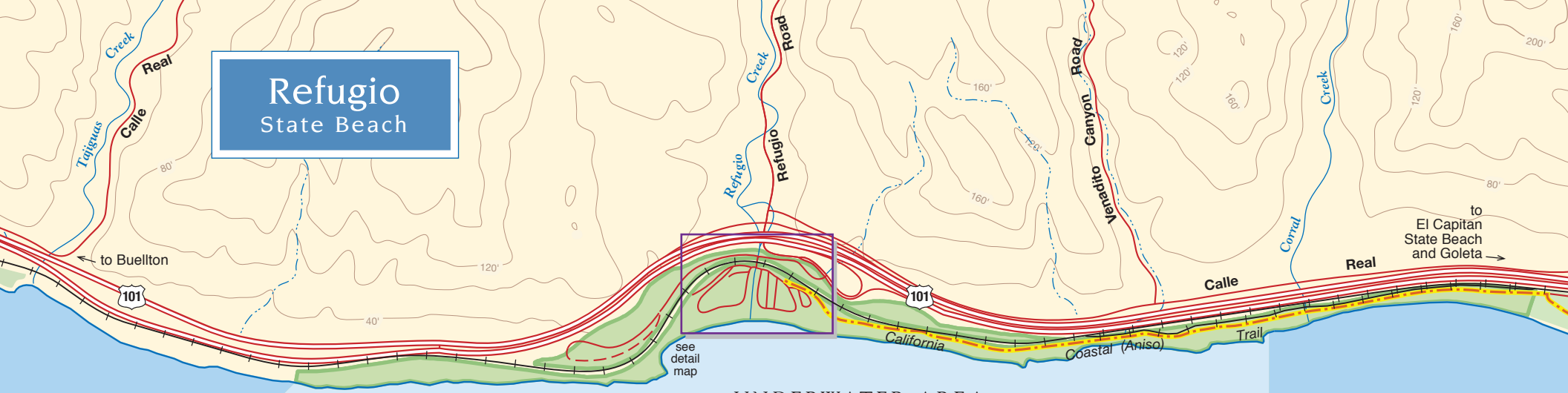
Accessibility is continually improving. For updates, visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

### PLEASE REMEMBER

- **CONSULT A LIFEGUARD OR A TIDE CHART BEFORE HIKING ALONG THE BEACH.** The beach that exists at low tide may disappear when the tide comes in, trapping you against the cliffs.
- Keep dogs on leashes no longer than six feet, and in a tent or your vehicle at night.
- Park quiet hours (10 p.m. – 6 a.m.) are strictly enforced. Generators may not be used between 8 p.m. and 10 a.m. Noise should not be audible beyond campsites at any time.
- A parent or guardian must accompany campers under 18. Unaccompanied youth must present written consent from a parent or guardian stating the dates of the authorized stay at Refugio State Beach.



# Refugio State Beach



## Legend

- Major Road
- Paved Road
- Unpaved/Service Road
- Railroad
- Trail: Accessible
- Trail: Hike & Bike
- Creek
- Intermittent Stream
- Underwater Area

- Accessible Feature
- Campfire Center
- Campground
- Group Campground
- Lifeguard Tower
- Parking
- Ranger Station
- Restrooms
- Showers
- Store

## NEARBY STATE PARKS

- El Capitan State Beach  
2 El Capitan State Beach Rd  
Goleta 93117 (805) 585-1850 M-F
- Chumash Painted Cave SHP  
Highway 154 on Painted Cave Road  
Santa Barbara 93105 (805) 585-1850 M-F

UNDERWATER AREA

# PACIFIC OCEAN

