

# San Onofre State Beach



## 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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### **CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS**

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### **San Onofre State Beach**

**San Clemente, CA 92672**

**(949) 492-4872**

**San Mateo Campground**

**830 Cristianitos Road**

**San Onofre Bluffs Campground**

**Basilone Road exit off I-5,**

**then south 3 miles on Pacific Coast Highway**

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*At this vital watershed  
area, San Onofre State  
Beach offers a surfer's  
paradise, with seven  
miles of beachfront and  
legendary surf breaks.*



**S**an Onofre State Beach sits at the edge of a 3,000-acre scenic coastal canyon area.

Native Acjachemen, Spanish missionaries, rancheros, caballeros, the United States Marines and surfing legends have all made history at San Onofre. The diverse recreational and natural offerings of this park's three distinct sections—San Onofre Bluffs, San Onofre Surf Beach and San Mateo Campground—make it one of the most popular state parks in California.

### **NATIVE PEOPLE**

Acjachemen territory ranged from what is now northern San Diego County, along Orange County's central coast, and inland from the Pacific Ocean into the Santa Ana Mountains.

Panhe is an ancient Acjachemen village, over 8,000 years old, located in the park. Acjachemen people can trace their ancestors to Panhe, which today remains a sacred ceremonial and cultural site.

### **Mission and Rancho Periods**

Under Spanish rule, Acjachemen were forced to labor building nearby Mission San Juan Capistrano. After the mission was completed in 1776, the Spanish mission priests renamed the Acjachemen "Juaneño." Today, their descendants are known as the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation.

Many of today's Juaneño have adopted the indigenous term Acjachemen. The State of California



Photo courtesy of Stephen Francis



*Surfing off Trestles Beach*

officially recognized the tribe in 1993. Tribal members have revived their once-extinct Acjachemen language; they are actively seeking federal tribal recognition.

### **PARK HISTORY**

This park was once part of Rancho de San Onofrio y Santa Margarita, more than 89,000 acres granted to brothers Pío Pico and Andrés Pico by governor Luis Alvarado in 1841. Three years later, the brothers were granted another 44,000 acres at Rancho Las Flores. California's largest land grant, at 133,440 acres, became known as Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores. The U.S. Government acquired the land by eminent domain in 1942 for a U.S. Marine Corps training facility. This facility, Camp Joseph H. Pendleton, was dedicated

on September 25, 1942, by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

San Onofre State Beach was leased to the state by the United States Marine Corps in 1971. San Onofre—with its surf spots at Trestles and neighboring beaches—has a longtime association with the sport of surfing and the evolution of Southern California's modern surf culture. San Onofre's consistent wave breaks have attracted dedicated surfers since 1933. Surfing competitions began in 1938.

### **NATURAL HISTORY**

The park lies on the edge of the Santa Ana Mountains, along the Pacific Ocean. Its habitats and terrains vary from flat, sandy beaches to sheer coastal cliffs, marshes to alluvial floodplains, and prairies to rolling foothills. Spectacular vertical terraces, nearly 100 feet tall, form beachside bluffs.

*A member of the Acjachemen Nation at Panhe's annual Earth Day celebration.*

## Wildlife

Ten federally endangered or threatened species seek shelter at San Onofre. The steelhead trout, tidewater goby, San Diego fairy shrimp, Riverside fairy shrimp, arroyo toad, Pacific pocket mouse, least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher are endangered. The Western snowy plover and California gnatcatcher are threatened.

The nearly pristine water of the San Mateo and San Onofre watersheds provide one of the last ecosystems for these delicate species. The

watershed, home to many bird and aquatic species, is also the last natural wildlife corridor connecting the Cleveland National Forest to the ocean.

Offshore, visitors may spot sea lions, dolphins or migrating whales in season.



*Pacific pocket mouse*

## Vegetation

Mediterranean-type plant life—adapted to handle winter rains and warm, dry summers—dominates San Onofre's habitats. Common plants are sycamore, California sage, laurel sumac and grasses.

## Climate

The climate is moderate. Balmy sea breezes roll in from the coast, cooling the air along the shore. Coastal fog is often present in early morning and at night.

## RECREATION

**Day Use**—Two of the state's most popular surfing beaches attract



*Snowy egret*



*Bicyclists frequent the Old Highway 101 route through the park.*

wave riders—Surf Beach and Trestles Beach. Non-surfers may picnic, swim, walk or relax here.

**Trails**—Hikers enjoy miles of backcountry on San Mateo campground trails. At the San Onofre Bluffs campground there are seven quarter-mile-long trails leading to the beach from the bluff top.

**Camping**—Two separate campgrounds at San Mateo and San Onofre Bluffs have a total of 333 tent or RV campsites. For more information and reservations, visit [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov) or call (800) 444-7275.

**Special Events and Activities**—The park hosts varied activities during the year, including surf competitions, beach clean-ups, Junior Ranger programs, an annual Earth Day celebration at Panhe, and other interpretive and educational programs. For current special events and activities, visit [www.sanofoundation.org](http://www.sanofoundation.org).

## ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

**Camping**—San Mateo Campground has five accessible sites (two with electrical hookups). Restrooms and coin showers are generally accessible.

**Beach/Shore Access**—From June 1 through Labor Day, call the lifeguard tower at (949) 366-8592 any day to reserve a beach wheelchair. In the off season, call on weekends to reserve a beach wheelchair.

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

## PLEASE REMEMBER

- Eight-person limit per campsite
- Alcohol, smoking, dogs and firearms are not permitted on the beach or trails.
- Campfires are allowed only within designated park fire rings (firewood only; no pallet burning).

## NEARBY STATE PARKS

- San Clemente State Beach  
225 Avenida Calafia, San Clemente, CA 92672 (949) 492-0802 / 492-4872
- Doheny State Beach, 25300 Dana Point Harbor Drive, Dana Point, CA 92629 (949) 496-6171 / 492-0802
- Crystal Cove State Park  
8471 North Coast Highway, Laguna Beach, CA 92651 (949) 494-3539

