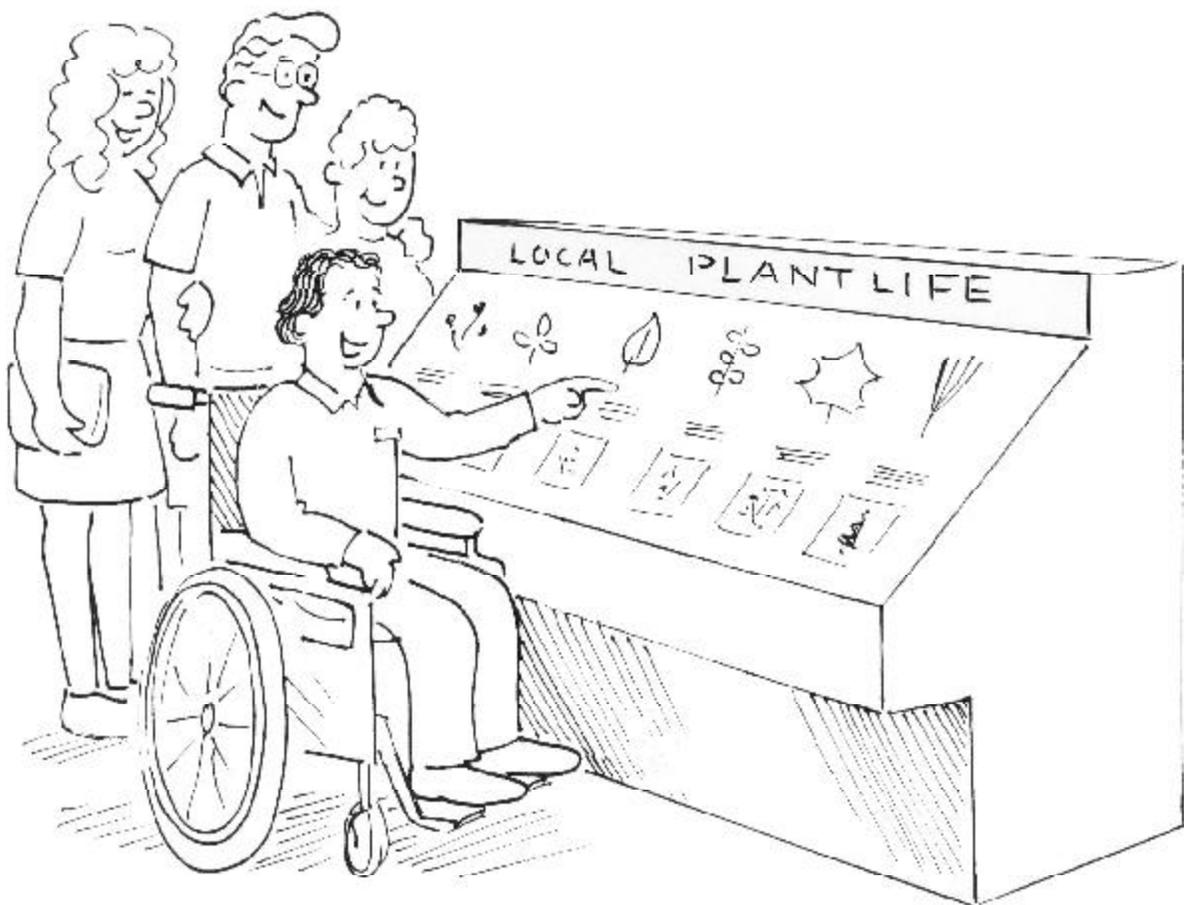

Interpretive Facilities



Overview

With the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, the California Department of Parks and Recreation is required to make all facilities accessible to people with disabilities. Steps should be taken to make sure that visitors have:

- Access to facilities from public sidewalks, parking, or public transportation. Adjustments may include adding ramps, additional accessible parking spaces, and widening entrances.
- Access to the goods and services offered in the facility. Adjustments may include rearranging the layout of the exhibits or display areas, lowering counter heights, and providing Braille or large print signage.
- Access to restroom facilities. Adjustments may include widening doorways, providing accessible signage, and installing grab bars.
- Access to any other privileges, advantages, or accommodations provided by state parks.

Newly constructed buildings and facilities must be free from architectural and communication barriers that restrict access or use by individuals with disabilities. Also, any alterations to an existing building must be made accessible.

State Parks must meet requirements delineated in Title II of the ADA, which applies to public agencies. Title II states that accessibility requirements must be met, with two exceptions: When compliance would result in a “fundamental alteration” of the program or service or when “undue financial or administrative burden” would be created. An example of fundamental alteration might be viewed in the creation of a backcountry trail into a wilderness area. In order to make such a trail accessible, significant alteration would likely need to be accomplished, this then would destroy the intended purpose of the trail—providing a wilderness experience. As it applies to State Parks, the exemption based on undue financial/administrative burden could be extremely difficult to justify, as we are a branch of the State of California government.

If accessibility requirements cannot be met, alternative steps must be taken to make the park resources, interpretive displays, or services of state parks accessible. These could include providing services at the door or outside, relocating exhibit objects or merchandise to accessible shelves or spaces, and providing activities in accessible locations. **Facilities and programs accessible to people with disabilities should be identified with the proper symbols of accessibility.** Also, all accessible entrances need to display the International Symbol of Accessibility. Refer to the *Publication Guidelines* on page 165, for information regarding access symbols.

Two levels of accessibility regulations exist—federal and state. At each level, there is considerable early legislation regarding accessibility. At this time, most dominant from the federal level is *Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines* (ADAAG) and from the state, Title 24, State Building Code. In those instances where differences exist between the federal and state laws, the most stringent of the two must be followed. A consolidated resource regarding most issues influenced by both federal and state legislation is the department’s *Access to Parks Guidelines* (ATPG), which begins on page 177. In some cases, the department may recommend more than what the law requires.

For the purposes of this handbook, this section will focus on interpretive facilities, including amphitheaters and campfire centers; historic structures and sites; interpretive trails; and visitors centers, interpretive centers, museums, and the exhibits displayed in them. The information provided in this section is intended to give the reader guidance on improving accessibility to our interpretive facilities. However, it is by no means comprehensive. **For complete information on compliance with departmental requirements in relation to facilities, park staff should always consult *Access to Parks Guidelines*.** References to specific chapters in *Access to Parks Guidelines*, which begins on page 177, are made throughout the following sections.

Amphitheaters and Campfire Centers

Amphitheaters and campfire centers can be very effective interpretive facilities. They provide space for day or evening talks, workshops, demonstrations, audio-visual programs, dramatic presentations, puppet shows, Junior Ranger programs, and special events.

These facilities and the routes to them need to be physically accessible to visitors using wheelchairs and other assistive mobility devices. At campfire centers and amphitheaters, the programs themselves need to be accessible to all visitors, including those who may have hearing, learning, mental, or mobility impairments.

The following suggestions and requirements are provided to assist park staff in assessing and designing amphitheaters and campfire centers to assure access to all visitors, including those with disabilities. However, this is not a comprehensive list. For specific information on facility requirements, see *Access to Parks Guidelines*, *Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines*, and *California State Accessibility Standards*.



Hearing Impairments

- Provide an assistive listening system, like those described in the *Assistive Listening Systems* section on page 21. When this equipment is made available, the International Symbol of Access for Hearing Loss (shown here) should be displayed. Receivers for assistive listening systems shall be provided at a rate of 4% of the total number of seats, but in no case less than two receivers.
- If the campfire center or amphitheater seats a large audience, use an amplification system for programs.
- If the listening system serves individual fixed seats, these seats should be located within a 50' viewing distance of the stage or playing area, with a complete view of the performance space. (ADAAG, 4.33.6)
- Remember, hearing guide dogs are allowed in all park facilities.
- Amphitheaters and campfire centers should be located in areas with minimal background noise.



Mobility Impairments

- Evaluate the route from the parking area to the amphitheater or campfire center. The path should be accessible to people using wheelchairs or other assistive devices. Stairs, curbs, steep slopes, and slippery surfaces may prove difficult for visitors with mobility impairments. A route with ramps may be necessary. The campfire center at San Simeon State Beach has a paved trail that directs visitors from accessible parking to the campfire center. Space is provided near the front of the campfire center for people using wheelchairs. See *Access to Parks Guidelines*, Chapter 34, for detailed information.
- Walkways, corridors, aisles, slopes and handrails have specific measurement requirements that must be met. See *Access to Parks Guidelines*, Chapter 8, for information on these requirements.
- *Access to Parks Guidelines*, Chapter 8, also contains detailed information about seating requirements.
- The ground or floor of the wheelchair space should be level, firm and slip-resistant. (ADAAG, 4.33.4) Wood chips and gravel are not recommended as a surface for campfire centers, as they can be extremely slippery. Concrete, asphalt, or a hard-packed dirt surface, resistant to puddling when wet, work best.
- An accessible route should connect wheelchair seating spaces with the performing area and backstage areas used by performers. (ADAAG 4.33.5) San Simeon State Beach has provided a ramp leading to the stage of the campfire center, so visitors with mobility impairments are able to participate in skits.
- Remember, Canine Companions and other guide dogs are legally permitted in all facilities.

Visual Impairments

- The amphitheater or campfire center should be bright and evenly lit during the time when visitors are entering or exiting the facility.
- On at least one side of the trail to the campfire center, a distinctive edge should be provided to serve as a cue for visitors with visual impairments. This edge should differ from the surface texture of the trail, as well as the textures outside the trail. Refer to the *Interpretive Trails* section on page 209, for more information.
- Walkways and aisles should be free from protruding objects. Refer to ATPG, Chapter 19, for specific requirements regarding protruding objects.
- There are very specific requirements regarding signage. Refer to ATPG, Chapter 36, for detailed information.
- Stairways must be designed according to specific standards. Refer to ATPG, Chapter 40, for detailed information.
- Remember, guide dogs are legally permitted in all park facilities.

Historic Structures and Sites

Historic structures are preserved original or reconstructed structures of a particular period. In state parks, they are used variously for historic structure museums (house museums), visitor centers, museums, interpretive centers, concessions, park offices, and storage. Historic structures are often distinguished by features such as narrow hallways and entryways, steep or monumental stairways and steps, and heavy doors. These elements not only pose difficulty for people with disabilities, but also may form actual physical barriers that make some historic structures inaccessible. Historic sites are locations of historical importance.

How do you make historic buildings or sites accessible to people with disabilities without threatening or destroying their historic significance? This is often a very difficult question to answer. Access to Parks Guidelines, Chapter 23, which deals with historic buildings/sites, states, "The same access code requirements as those for non-historic buildings shall apply to historic structures unless compliance with regular code threatens historical significance or character-defining features. In other words, the accessibility requirements outlined in other ATPG chapters on buildings, doorways, elevators, lifts, ramps, restrooms, routes of travel, etc., should be applied before" alternatives are considered. Staff must fully understand that a decision to use alternative access is not to be taken lightly. Serious consideration must be



given to various descending levels of creating access as outlined in the California State Historical Building Code, Chapter 8-6, Alternative Accessibility Provisions. Ultimately, documentation must be developed, and sign-off at headquarters, not within the District, will be necessary.

Examples of alternative measures include:

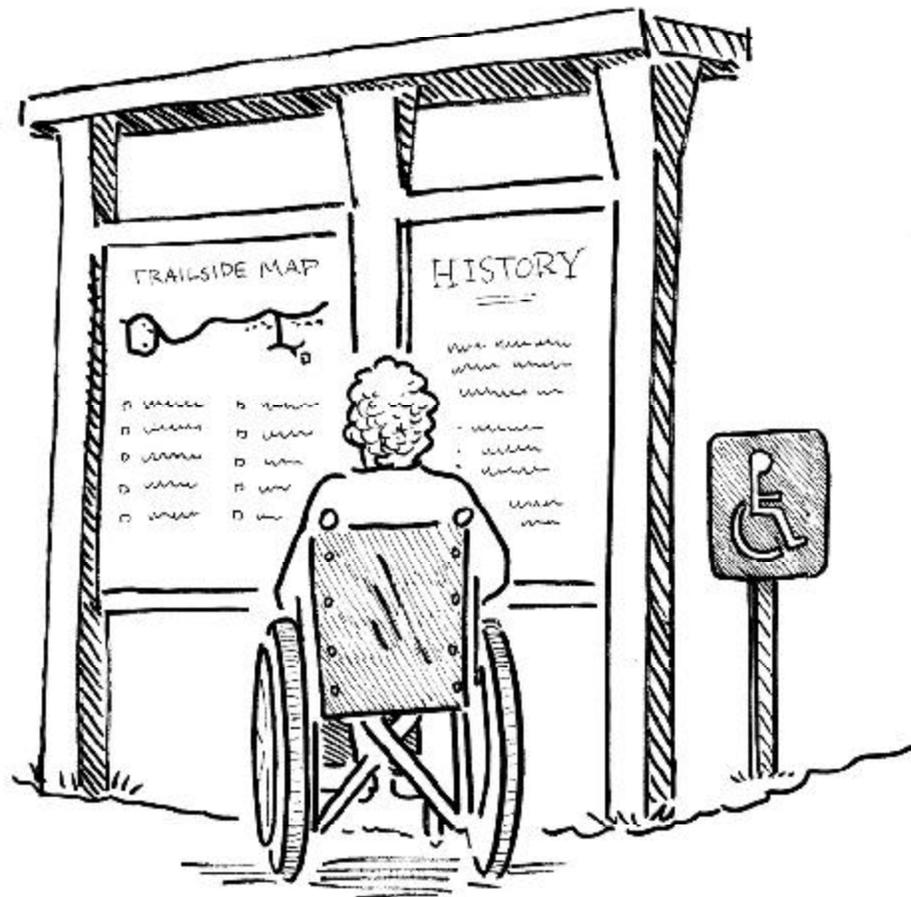
- Providing audio-visual materials and devices to show the areas of the historic structure or site that are inaccessible. These could include: films, video, slide shows, photographs, or taped audiodescription of the areas.
- Arrange for interpretive staff to guide individuals with disabilities into or through inaccessible areas of the building or site. **Do not** carry a visitor with a mobility impairment through an inaccessible area. The only time park staff may carry a visitor is when it is requested by the visitor and the park staff person is specifically trained on how to do so, or in the case of an emergency.
- Provide accessible, portable restrooms if those inside the historic structure cannot be modified to meet ADA requirements.

Interpretive Trails

Trails can effectively interpret the quality and extent of an area's cultural development or of its natural life forms, forces, and elements. Resources located on the trail can be interpreted through brochure descriptions keyed to numbered posts or recognizable landmarks, audio versions of brochure text, trail panels, visitor-activated message repeaters, or park staff. Self-guided trails also can serve large numbers of users at their own pace. They should provide physical access to park areas, as well as effectively interpret the park's resources.

Trails should be designed for all visitors. People with disabilities do not particularly want a "special" or separate trail. For example, trails providing signage or printed guides in Braille are encouraged, but they should not be labeled as "Braille Trails." Keep in mind that trails made accessible to people in wheelchairs are also convenient for visitors using baby strollers, crutches, or walkers.

A variety of obstacles can make maneuvering on a path or trail difficult or impossible for visitors with disabilities. These obstacles may include large rocks, protruding roots, overhanging branches or vines, soft trail surfaces, erosion channels, ice, and steam crossings. Attempts should be made to keep paths and trails clear of such hazards.



Understandably, not all outdoor areas are capable of being wheelchair accessible, just like you cannot build roads in places with rocky cliffs or steep, rugged mountain sides without significantly altering the natural environment. State park trails need to be as accessible as possible, but sensitive to the natural landscape.

The department has specific standards for paths and trails published in the *Access to Parks Guidelines*, Chapter 43. Refer to this publication, as well as guidelines for “Walks” in *California State Accessibility Standards, Title 24* and “Accessible Routes” in *The Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines*.

The following suggestions will assist park staff in designing and operating trail systems, so they can be made accessible to all visitors, including those with disabilities. The requirements are indicated with the section of the law (in parenthesis) that applies to the situation.

Hearing Impairments

- Make available a transcript of any verbal trail information provided through visitor-activated message repeaters.
- Trail panel text should follow the easy-to-read format, as described in the *Publication Guidelines* section on page 243.
- Remember, hearing guide dogs are allowed on trails.

Learning Disabilities

- Provide interactive wayside exhibits. Brannan Island State Recreation Area offers “adventure packs” to visitors using self-guided trails. Included in these packs are magnifying glasses, field guides, and other tools useful for self-guided interpretation.
- Trail panel text should be grouped in an organized fashion, following the easy-to-read format described in the *Publication Guidelines* section on page 243.
- Information presented in trail signage should be in basic terms that avoid abstractions.
- Provide trails with varying lengths and degrees of difficulty. Some visitors with learning disabilities have shorter attention spans, and trails which take 20-30 minutes to complete may be preferred. Signs located at trail heads should clearly state the trail length, difficulty, and the approximate time it may take to complete the trail.
- Trail signage should include illustrations to supplement the printed text.
- Record trail signage on cassette tapes and make them available for loan to visitors who may be unable to read. Calaveras Big Trees State Park offers an audio cassette version of trail interpretation, as well as a self-guided trail brochure available at the trail head.

Mental Retardation

- Trails should be easy to follow. Clearly mark trail routes with directional signs, especially when separate trail paths cross.

- Offer maps of the trail for visitors to use while they are on their walk. Indicate on the map the trail's route and cultural or natural features that can be seen along the way. This stimulates curiosity and piques visitor interest.
- Provide interactive wayside exhibits. Examples of bark and leaves, or needles of the different trees in the area, could be made available for visitors to touch as they read about them. These may not only provide tactile and olfactory stimulation, but also will help keep visitors on the trail who might otherwise veer off to feel the textures of trees, or to smell the scent of a Douglas fir.
- Trail panel text should be grouped in an organized fashion, following the easy-to-read format described in the *Publication Guidelines* section on page 243.
- Information provided on trail signage should be presented in basic terms.
- Offer trails with varying lengths and degrees of difficulty. Some visitors with mental retardation have shorter attention spans and could easily become distracted or bored. A trail that takes 20-30 minutes to complete may be preferred. At the beginning of the trail, be sure to state the length, difficulty, and time it takes to complete the trail.
- Trail signage should include illustrations to supplement the printed text.
- Record the trail signage on cassette tapes and make them available for loan to visitors who may be unable to read.

Mobility Impairments

- There are specific requirements regarding physical accessibility to trails. Refer to *Access to Parks Guidelines*, Chapter 43, for more information.
- Signs should be positioned at the beginning of the trail, indicating the accessibility of the trail, obstacles which may be encountered on the trail, trail distance, and the time which it may take to complete the trail. Trails considered to be entirely physically accessible should display the "International Symbol of Accessibility" at the beginning of the trail and on trail maps.
- If possible, trails should be designed in a circular fashion and end where they began.
- When designing the trail, take into consideration the water run-off of the area, and make sure the trail has a hard-packed surface, free from exposed roots, holes, and rocks. Trail surfaces should be firm and slip-resistant. Concrete, asphalt, and other paved pathways meet this criteria, but are aesthetically unpleasant. Crushed stone, such as decomposed granite, can form an accessible surface when properly designed and constructed. Wood decking may be used as an accessible surface; however, this can be expensive, and warpage must be controlled. Other materials, such as polyethylene, are also being manufactured, and work well for trail decking systems. Grass can be used as an accessible route if it is level and short. Brick or other paving materials set in sand are not recommended because they can easily shift, causing irregularities in the surface. Do not use wood chips or gravel, as they can be extremely slippery. Untreated soil is not recommended. When wet, it may create a slippery surface, or can be eroded. Mono Lake

Tufa State Reserve has treated a sandy trail with a hardener, making the route easier for wheelchairs and strollers to negotiate, while keeping the trail natural. Two boardwalks have also been installed providing access to the lake shore.

- Provide all-terrain wheelchairs for visitors to use on sandy or rocky trails.
- Rest areas should be provided every 200'-300'. These should be off the trail, with benches (preferably having armrests and backs), and positioned so visitors can enjoy an interesting feature as they rest. Also, consider providing shelter from the hot sun or rainfall. Some visitors with mobility impairments may have difficulty controlling their body temperatures and could suffer from heat-related ailments. These visitors will especially appreciate the availability of shade in the warmer regions of the state.
- If possible, provide accessible restroom facilities and drinking fountains along the trail. The lack of restroom facilities often inhibits people with mobility impairments from venturing out onto park trails. Be sure to indicate the location of these facilities at the beginning of the trail, and on trail maps.
- Any facilities located on the trail, such as restrooms, drinking fountains, and picnic tables, should follow *Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines*, *Access to Parks Guidelines*, and *California State Accessibility Standards*.
- Trail panels and wayside exhibits should be placed so they can be easily read by visitors in wheelchairs. Refer to *Access to Parks Guidelines*, Chapter 19, for specific information on exhibits.
- Be careful not to “over” design for accessibility. The trail should be kept as natural as possible. Use native materials for railings, curbs, etc. Near Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management has constructed a hard-packed dirt trail with a river-rock edging.
- Remember, Canine Companions and other service dogs are allowed on trails.

Visual Impairments

- Position signs at the beginning of the trail indicating the accessibility of the trail, obstacles that may be encountered on the trail, trail distance, and the approximate time it takes to complete the trail.
- Trails should have a hard surface, free from obstructions, such as exposed roots, rocks, large holes, etc.
- Provide a distinctive edge on at least one side of the trail to cue visitors with visual impairments. This edge should differ from the surface texture of the trail, as well as textures outside the trail.
- Walkways and aisles should be clear from protruding objects. Refer to *Access to Park Guidelines*, Chapter 43, for specific requirements.
- Offer a handout in Braille or in large print of the trail signage text.
- Record the trail signage on cassette tapes and make them available for loan to visitors with visual impairments.

- Interpretive trails should be outlined with rope to provide access to people with visual impairments. Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park has outlined a trail with a rope and provided text panel information on tape. Knots in the rope provide cues about where to stop and listen to the tape.
- If, for some unavoidable reason, the trail crosses a road, there should be a change in surface texture beginning 5' before the trail meets the road, and extending to the road.
- A curb or a railing should be installed whenever there is danger of falling off the trail.
- Be careful not to “over” design for accessibility. The trail should be kept as natural as possible. Use native materials for railings, curbs, etc.
- Provide interactive trail exhibits that involve all the senses. Do not label these as “for the blind” or “blind trail.” Encourage all visitors to use the interactive exhibits. Calaveras Big Trees State Park has a trail named, “The Three Senses Trail,” inviting every visitor to explore the smells, textures, and sounds of the area.
- Remember, guide dogs are allowed on trails.

Limited English Proficiency

- Develop handouts of the trail signage in an easy-to-read English format, as well as in different languages. For more information, refer to the *Publication Guidelines* section on page 243. Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve offers trail brochures in German, French, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, and Dutch.
- Trail signage should include illustrations to supplement the printed text.
- Tape versions of the trail panel text in different languages and make these available to visitors.
- Provide visitor-activated message repeaters on the trail in different languages.

Older Adults

Older adults may have one or more of the disabilities previously mentioned, or none of them. The following are additional considerations for older adults:

- Some older adults need extra time to allow their eyes to adjust to drastic changes in light levels. Others may have difficulty seeing in dimly lit areas. For trails that pass through areas of poor lighting, such as a densely forested area, or that have extreme changes in light levels, signage should be placed before entering the area to warn visitors. Also, any obstacles should be removed. If most of the trail is in low-level light, you may want to instruct visitors to carry flashlights.
- If possible, provide accessible restroom facilities and drinking fountains along the trail. The lack of restroom facilities often inhibits older adults from venturing out onto park trails. Be sure to indicate the location of these facilities at the beginning of the trail and on trail maps.

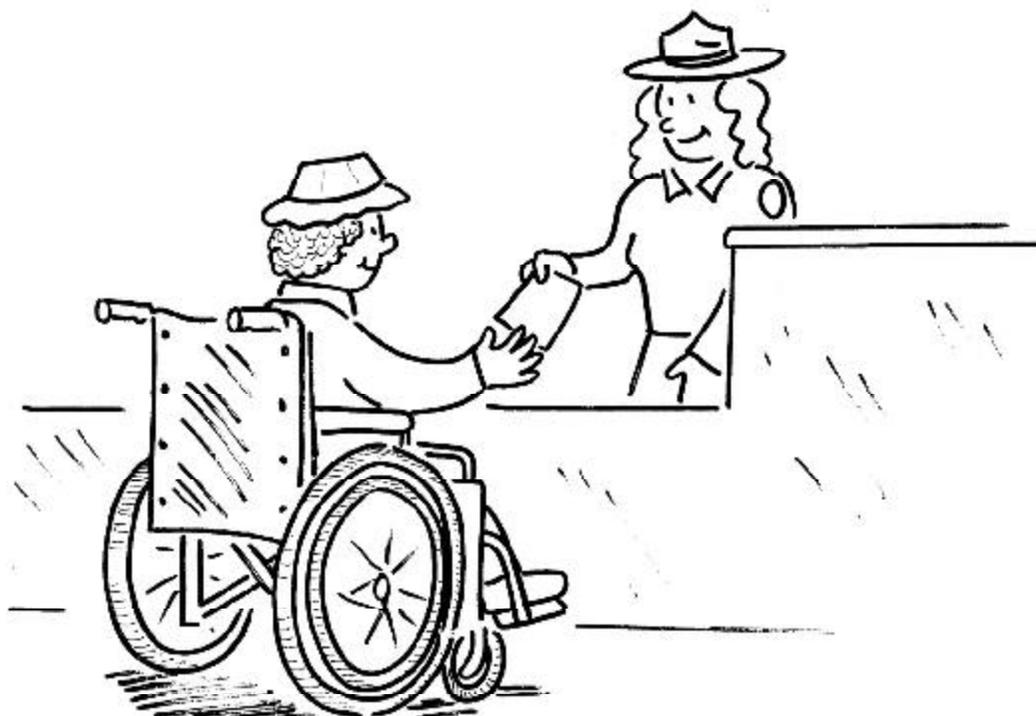
Visitor Centers, Interpretive Centers, and Museums

Visitor centers, interpretive centers, and museums are major attractions in state parks. Most visitors will go into a park's interpretive facility to orient themselves to their surroundings, to learn about the park's natural or cultural history, or to simply use the restroom. It is imperative that these structures, and the exhibits and services they contain, be accessible to all visitors.

Visitor centers are staffed facilities that help individuals become oriented to the area they are visiting. Often, they are the visitor's first stop in the park. Many centers provide a comfortable space where individuals can also relax and refresh themselves after their trip to the park. Most visitor centers include restrooms, drinking fountains, telephones, and first aid resources, along with an information area. Some visitor centers also contain interpretive exhibits and sales areas.

Interpretive centers and museums offer the comfort and information services of a visitor center, with a strong focus on park interpretation that highlights relevant themes. Many of the facilities have indoor and outdoor exhibits that include dioramas, artifacts, and plant and animal specimens, as well as replicas. Audio-visual programs may also be provided, allowing visitors to relax and watch a short film or slide show before (or after) exploring the park's

PARK INFORMATION



natural and cultural features. Oftentimes, a visit to the interpretive center or museum becomes the highlight of a visitor's park experience.

Historic structure museums, also known as historic house museums, differ from other park museums. These facilities are also required to be accessible, but may, in some cases, follow alternate minimum requirements. More information is provided in the *Historic Structures and Sites* section on page 205.

The following requirements and suggestions are provided to assist the process of assessing and redesigning interpretive facilities to better accommodate all park visitors. This is not a comprehensive list of requirements. Refer to the *Access to Parks Guidelines*, Chapters 7 and 44, for detailed information.

Hearing Impairments

- Provide an assistive listening system to aid communication between park staff and visitors, and/or to supplement audio exhibits. Refer to the *Assistive Listening Systems* section on page 21 for more information. Where this equipment is offered, be sure to display the International Symbol of Access for Hearing Loss (shown here).
- All informational and interpretive signage should follow an easy-to-read format and display the proper access symbols. Refer to the *Publication Guidelines* section on page 243 for more information.
- Display a plan of the facility and/or a map of the park. This will help visitors find their way around, without having to ask. It will also aid park staff who give directions or descriptions of the area.
- Emergency alarms should be visual, as well as audible. For information on alarms, refer to *Access to Park Guidelines*, Chapter 1.
- Remember, hearing guide dogs are allowed in all park facilities.



Mobility Impairments

- Evaluate the route from the parking lot to the interpretive facility. The route should be accessible to people using wheelchairs or other assistive devices. Stairs, curbs, steep slopes, and slippery surfaces may prove difficult for visitors with mobility impairments. It may be necessary to develop a route with ramps.
- If the interpretive facility is considered historic and is not readily accessible, like a house museum, refer to the *Historic Structures and Sites* section on page 205 for special requirements.
- For information on information and sales areas, refer to *Access to Parks Guidelines*, Chapter 44.
- Sales items, such as books, maps, and souvenirs, should be easily reached by visitors using wheelchairs. See the diagram below for forward and side reach ranges of people using wheelchairs, and refer to *Access to Parks Guidelines*, Chapter 32.

- Visitor flow through the facility should be smooth. If possible, create a circular route to avoid situations where visitors must back up or turn around to get out.
- Ground and floor surfaces along accessible routes and in accessible rooms and spaces including floors, walks, ramps, stairs, and curb ramps, shall be stable, firm, and slip-resistant. (ADAAG, 4.5.1)
- Refer to *Access to Parks Guidelines*, Chapter 7, for detailed information on measurements for walkways, corridors, ramps, slopes, etc.
- Seating having backrests and armrests should be provided in the interpretive center, visitor center, or museum. Seating provided outdoors should be located in areas with shade.
- Restrooms, drinking fountains, telephones, and other services provided at a visitor center need to be wheelchair accessible. Refer to *Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines*, *Access to Parks Guidelines*, and *California State Accessibility Standards* for requirements and guidelines.
- Remember, Canine Companions and other service dogs are legally permitted in all facilities.

Visual Impairments

- Provide a tactile or talking map of the interpretive facility and/or surrounding park areas, illustrating trails, roads, restrooms, and points of interest.
- Signage must follow the guidelines specified in *Access to Parks Guidelines*, Chapter 36.
- If a trail serves as the main route to the interpretive facility, then a distinctive edge should be provided on at least one side of the trail, to serve as a cue for visitors with visual impairments. This edge should differ from the surface texture of the trail, as well as the textures outside the trail. Refer to the *Interpretive Trails* section on page 209, for more information.
- The interpretive facility should be bright and evenly lighted.
- Walkways and aisles should be clear from protruding objects. Refer to *Access to Parks Guidelines*, Chapter 19, for more information.
- For specific information about stairway requirements, refer to *Access to Parks Guidelines*, Chapter 40.
- Remember, guide dogs are legally permitted in all park facilities.

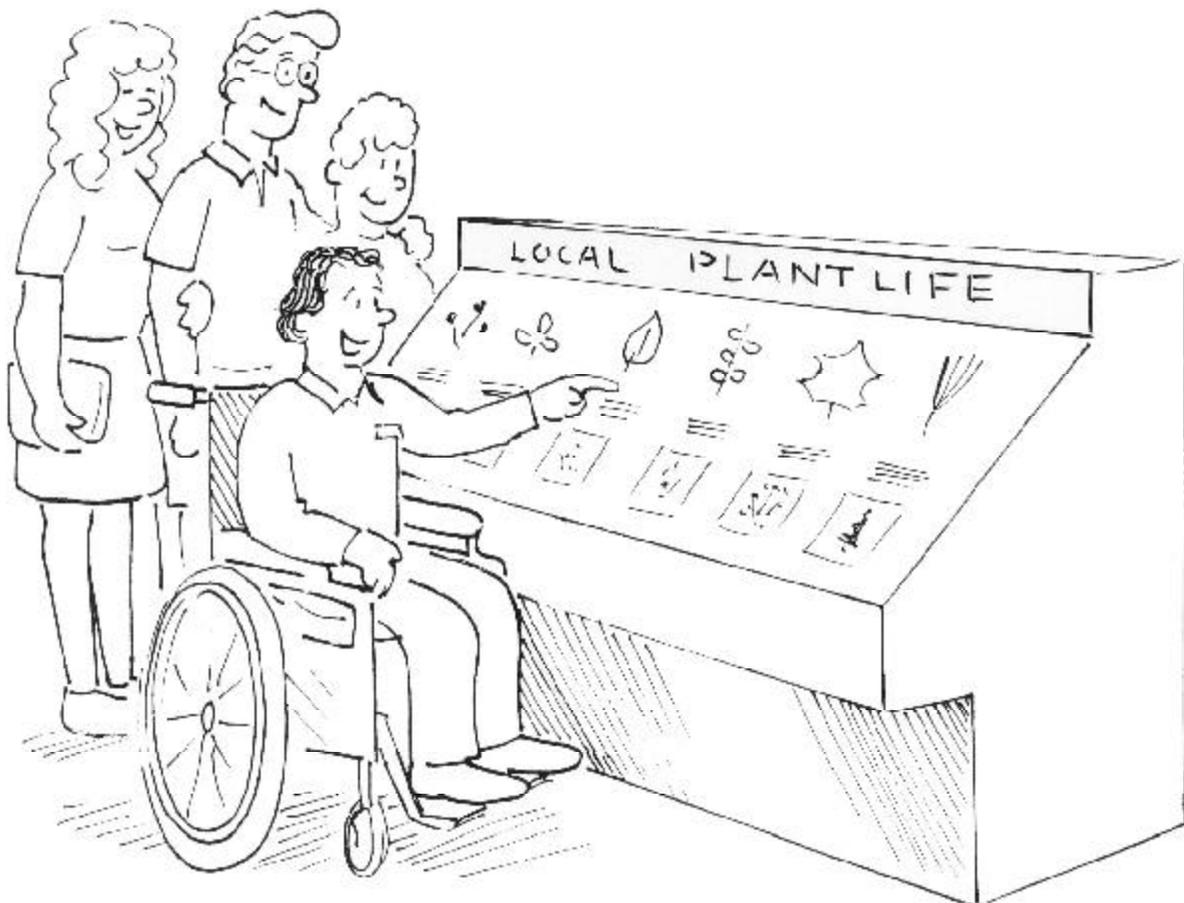
Exhibits

The main purposes of interpretive exhibits are to inspire visitors to explore, to learn, and to protect the area's natural, cultural, and recreational resources. Exhibits use many media, including encased objects, touchable objects, interactive games, natural history dioramas, models, historic setting vignettes, three-dimensional maps, text and computer programs, environmental monitors (weather, tides, earthquakes, etc.), microscopes, live animals and plants, and more.

Listed in this section are suggestions on how to make exhibits accessible and more enjoyable for people with disabilities. For specific information on exhibit requirements refer to *Access to Parks Guidelines*, Chapter 19.

Hearing Impairments

- Provide exhibits that involve all the senses. For example, consider having samples of dried foods pertaining to the time period or theme for visitors to smell. Shasta State Historic Park displays, among other items coffee beans, tea, coconut chips, soups, and pickles in a barrel at the historic Litsch Store.



- Provide an assistive listening system and transcripts of exhibits containing audible information. Refer to the *Assistive Listening Systems* section on page 21. Sutter's Fort State Historic Park has made a transcript available of their Soundstik® tours.

Learning Disabilities

- Interactive, touchable, and sensory exhibits are popular with all visitors. These exhibits can help reinforce written or audible information. A simple example of this is at the Lake Oroville State Recreation Area visitor center, where they provide a display of local rocks for visitors to touch and feel, along with a printed description of each type of rock.
- Exhibits should be well organized; visually and structurally.
- Assistive listening devices, such as hardwire or infrared systems that translate the exhibit text, can be helpful to visitors who may be unable to read. Refer to the *Assistive Listening Systems* section on page 21, for more information.
- Exhibit text should follow an easy-to-read format, as described in the *Publication Guidelines* section on page 243.
- Arrange to have interpretive staff available to demonstrate interactive exhibits or to respond to visitor questions.
- When using a font that may be difficult to read, such as script or ornate lettering, also provide the text in an easy-reading sans serif font.

Mental Retardation

- Interactive, touchable, and sensory exhibits are popular with all visitors. Calaveras Big Trees State Park provides cones, foliage, and footprint casts for visitors to touch and inspect.
- In some situations, it may be necessary to remind visitors which exhibits may or may not be touched, or to put artifacts that may not be touched behind glass or another barrier.
- Locate interpretive staff nearby to answer questions or demonstrate interactive exhibits.
- Exhibit text should be easy to read, or a handout of exhibit information in an easy-to-read format should be supplied. Refer to the *Publication Guidelines* section on page 243.
- When using a font that may be difficult to read, such as script or gothic, provide an accompanying text using an easy-reading sans serif font.

Mobility Impairments

- Provide a captioned film, slide show, or photographs of exhibits that cannot be made accessible. The Governor's Mansion State Historic Park lets visitors see an illustrated guide to the second floor, which is inaccessible to wheelchairs.
- For specific information on viewing zones, labels, horizontally mounted displays, and space for wheelchair access, refer to *Access to Parks Guidelines*, Chapter 19.

- Be aware of the types of fixtures used on interactive exhibits. Knobs, levers, handles, dials, etc., should be designed so they can be easily used by people with limited arm and hand movements.
- Take into consideration the forward and side reach of visitors in wheelchairs and adjust interactive exhibits accordingly. See *Access to Parks Guidelines*, Chapter 32.

Visual Impairments

- Tactile and sensory exhibits are especially helpful for visitors with visual impairments. A “touch table” with materials pertaining to the park can be an easy and fun exhibit to provide. Another idea is to arrange various objects (e.g., furs, rocks, bones, etc.) in “discovery” boxes. Then, invite visitors to explore with their hands in the boxes to try and guess the items they are touching. By lifting the lids, they could find the answers. The answers could also be provided in Braille for visitors who are visually impaired.
- Consider the lighting conditions of exhibits. They should be well and evenly lit. Reflective surfaces, glazed artwork, and shiny objects should be coordinated with their lighting to allow them to be viewed or read without glare.
- Exhibit text should follow the guidelines specified in *Access to Parks Guidelines*, Chapter 19.
- Provide examples of textures portrayed in paintings or photographs, such as straw, granite, or cloth, for visitors to touch and feel.
- Display a tactile relief map or make one available to visitors on request. This will assist visitors in orienting themselves to the park environment. Millerton Lake State Recreation Area uses a 3-D molded plastic map to help describe the Sierra Nevada rain basin. Visitors can touch and feel the mountains, valleys, and rivers.
- Keep magnifiers handy for visitors to examine photographs, signs, artifacts, fossils, and mounted specimens in the exhibits. Calaveras Big Trees State Park provides hand lenses to visitors so they may take a closer look at their geology display.
- Provide touchable models, either life-size or to scale, of rare or fragile objects that may not be touched. If the object is very large, reproduce a part of it so visitors can get an idea of its relative size. For example, the National Park Service has reproduced the foot of the Statue of Liberty for visitors to touch in the Statue of Liberty visitor center.
- Enlarge photographs to allow visitors to see more detail. Use non-glare glass or a matte finish on the photographic paper.
- Arrange to have interpretive staff near the exhibit area to answer questions, to read aloud exhibit titles, or to guide visitors with visual impairments through the exhibits. Refer to *The Sighted Guide Technique* on page 40.
- Be familiar with techniques used to describe historic and natural settings and objects. Use these to characterize the exhibits for visitors. Refer to the *Methods of Description* section on page 41, for more information.

- Record exhibit display information on cassette tapes. Loan these to visitors on request. The Morro Bay Museum of Natural History at Morro Bay State Park provides this service.
- Exhibit text and labels should be offered on request in large print (18 point font or larger) printed format. The museum at Morro Bay State Park has arranged cards with large print on their touch table. There, visitors can pick up the information cards and read the material up close.
- Offer additional informational resources in a reading list that pertains to an exhibit's theme. In this way, visitors may be able to take their park experience home through books in Braille, large print, or talking books available at local libraries.

Limited English Proficiency

- Provide audio explanations of the exhibits in English and in different languages. At Sutter's Fort State Historic Park, audio tours are provided in German, Spanish, Japanese, and English.
- Printed copies of exhibit text should be offered in different languages.
- Arrange to have interpretive staff near exhibits to answer visitor questions.
- Where possible, try to develop exhibits that rely on graphics and objects, rather than on text, to convey interpretive messages.
- A closer look or an opportunity to feel an object may replace verbal descriptions or printed explanations.

Older Adults

Older adults may have one or more of the disabilities previously mentioned, or none of them. In addition to some of the tips already mentioned, here are further considerations for older adults.

- Remove potential barriers, which may cause accidents, in areas with extreme changes in light. Some older visitors need time to allow their eyes to adjust to drastic changes in light.
- Cool colors, like green and blue, are not easily seen by some older visitors with increased eye lens density. Glare also can become a problem, with edges of counters seeming to blend in with their background, making them hard to distinguish. Using contrasting colors on edges and large print signs printed on matte backgrounds will assist older individuals with this type of visual impairment.