

# Portola Redwoods State Park



## 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 **(650) 948-9098**. If you need this publication in an alternate format, contact [interp@parks.ca.gov](mailto:interp@parks.ca.gov).

### CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

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[SaveTheRedwoods.org/csp](http://SaveTheRedwoods.org/csp)

### Portola Redwoods State Park

9000 Portola State Park Road

La Honda, CA 94020

**(650) 948-9098**

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*A hidden escape from  
the city, Portola Redwoods  
State Park provides visitors  
with their own secret  
place in a natural basin of  
evergreen forest.*





## **A**t Portola Redwoods State Park, silence and tranquility rule.

The road leading to the 2,800-acre park follows a ridgetop that drops down into a deeply shaded redwood forest. Portola Redwoods offers a hushed getaway from the suburban bustle of nearby Silicon Valley and the South Bay. Several trails follow meandering creeks where moisture-loving coast redwoods stand tall among thick ferns and redwood sorrel. Waterfalls on Fall and Pescadero creeks tumble down mossy banks and over sticks and rocks.

### **PARK HISTORY**

#### **Native People**

Native people have lived in the vicinity of Portola Redwoods State Park for thousands of years. The Santa Cruz Mountains and San Francisco peninsula were home to a mosaic of tribes. The Quiroste Tribe (pronounced Ki-raw'-stee) was the largest tribe; their territory ranged from what is now Año Nuevo to Pescadero, and up towards Skyline Ridge, including Portola Redwoods State Park.

Here, the Quiroste fished for steelhead trout and coho salmon, and they collected naturally forming *asphaltum* (tar) from Tar Creek to use as an adhesive and sealant. Shaped Olivella shell beads from the coast were used to barter and trade with inland tribes. Trading involved travel along established routes; one route passed through this park. Abalone, mussels, fish, and other seafoods—plus flints used to chip stone tools like knives, spears, and arrowheads—were among the many coastal resources that they traded. In return, inland materials like obsidian for stone tool making, foods, and bows from distant lands were brought to the Quiroste over mountain trails.

#### **European Contact**

Portola Redwoods State Park is named for the Spanish explorer Gaspar de Portolá. In 1769, the Portolá expedition traveled overland along the San Mateo coast to the San Francisco Bay, without actually reaching this spot. This journey, along



Photo courtesy of The Bancroft Library

*Gaspar de Portolá expedition  
“Discovery of the Bay of San Francisco”  
Painting by Walter G. Francis, 1909*

with several others that soon followed, led to Spanish settlement of the San Francisco and Monterey Bay areas.

The first settler in this area, Danish immigrant Christian Iverson, built a cabin along Pescadero Creek in the 1860s and split redwood shakes for a living. In 1889, Iverson sold his property to William Page, a successful lumberman. Page ran a shingle mill just east of the present day Slate Creek trail camp. He also established the old haul road, connecting several mills to the Embarcadero in Palo Alto. This haul road was later named Page Mill Road and still exists today.

In 1924, the Masonic Lodge's Islam Shrine acquired the property for a summer retreat. They built cabins, kitchens, a stage, and a recreation hall, which is the present-day visitor center. Because membership had dropped by 1945, the lodge sold the property to the State of California to create a new state park.







*Banana slug*

## NATURAL HISTORY

Huckleberries dominate the redwood understory; their thick, bushy branches provide shelter and nesting habitat for forest birds, which eat the berries and spread the seeds throughout the forest. Ferns, elk clover, and horsetail plants grow along the creeksides. In summer, look for bright blooms of leopard lilies. During winter rains, dormant lily bulbs wash downstream, where they start new colonies. On dry, south-facing hillsides and high ridges, redwoods give way to live oak, manzanita, and chamise.

The dominant forest tree in Portola is the redwood, but tan oak, madrone, California bay, big leaf maple, live oak, and Douglas-fir are among the park's tree species.

Protected coho salmon and steelhead trout live in Pescadero Creek. Old-growth trees provide important habitat for the marbled murrelet, an endangered seabird that nests high in the redwoods. Black-tailed deer, raccoons, gray squirrels, coyotes, and mountain lions call this area their home.

Climate change affects all living things within the redwood forest. Experts fear that the area's increase in average temperature and decrease in daily summer fog and winter rain may endanger redwoods and the forest life that depends on the redwood environment.

## RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Come prepared for any type of weather. The park gets 40 to 60 inches of rain per year, and the summer months can be foggy and cool.

**Visitor Center**—The accessible visitor center features interpretive and educational displays with a diorama and a sales area.

**Group Camping**—Portola Redwoods State Park has four group campgrounds. Ravine Group Camp holds 25 people, and the

Hillside, Point, and Circle Group Camps each hold 50 people.

**Camping**—More than 50 family sites, one accessible site, and four walk-in family sites may be reserved from late spring through mid-autumn. No campsites have hookups.

For site-specific camping information and reservations, visit [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov) or call (800) 444-7275.

**Trail Camps**—Six sites at Slate Creek Trail Camp are available from late spring through mid-autumn. Trail camps are limited to six people per site. Fires are not permitted, but backpacking stoves are allowed. Bring your own drinking water or a stream water filter. For trail camp reservations, call Big Basin Redwoods State Park at (831) 338-8861.

Four first-come, first-served hike-and-bike sites are located at the Huckleberry Campground.

**Hiking**—Eighteen miles of hiking trails range from easy to strenuous. The easy  $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile Sequoia Nature Trail begins near park headquarters and crosses Pescadero Creek. The half-mile Old Tree Trail is also considered an easy hike. The moderate three-mile Slate Creek Trail winds through redwoods to the Page Mill site. For a strenuous 13-mile round-trip journey, Bear Creek Trail leads to Peters Creek Trail and its magnificent 1.3-mile loop through ancient old-growth redwoods.

**Picnicking**—Picnic areas are near the visitor center. To reserve the 75-person Group Picnic Area for your wedding or special event, call (831) 335-3455.

## ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

One reservable campsite, the visitor center and restrooms, and one picnic site are accessible. Currently, no trails are wheelchair-accessible at Portola Redwoods State Park. Accessibility is continually improving. For updates, call (916) 445-8949 or visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.





Visitor center

### PLEASE REMEMBER

Use extreme care during the last few miles of the drive to the park; the road downhill is narrow and steep.

**Pets**—Pets are permitted only in campsites and picnic areas, and on paved roads and the Upper and Lower Escape Roads.

Dogs must be on a leash no longer than six feet and attended at all times. They must be confined with their guardian inside a tent or vehicle at night. Except for service animals, dogs are not allowed on hiking trails or in the visitor center.

**Bicycles**—Hiking trails are closed to bikes and horses. Old Haul service road—for hikers, equestrians and cyclists—winds through redwoods, out of the park to Memorial County Park.

**Firewood**—Firewood may be purchased at the park office. Please do not gather wood; the health of the forest depends on the nutrients provided by fallen wood.

**Quiet Hours**—Quiet hours are from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m. Do not operate generators between 8 p.m. and 10 a.m. Sounds should not be audible beyond your campsite at any time.

**Fishing**—No fishing is allowed in the park.

**Ticks**—Ticks are common in this area; some may be infected with Lyme disease. Tuck in cuffs while hiking, and check for bites.

**Yellowjackets**—Attracted to meat and sugar, these wasps live in cavities or underground. They can deliver repeated, painful stings.

**Poison Oak**—Leaves in groups of three may be green, red, shiny, dull, or even completely absent in winter. Even leafless stems can cause a serious reaction. Stay on trails to avoid contact with poison oak.

**Stinging Nettles**—Growing in damp areas such as stream banks, stinging nettles have large, spear-shaped leaves with stems up to six feet tall. This plant is covered with tiny, stinging hairs that can inflict a painful reaction if even lightly touched.

**Caution**—All natural and cultural features are protected by law and must not be disturbed or removed.

### NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Castle Rock State Park  
15000 Skyline Blvd.  
Los Gatos 95030 (408) 867-2952
- Butano State Park  
1500 Cloverdale Road  
Pescadero 94060 (650) 879-2040
- Big Basin Redwoods State Park  
21600 Big Basin Way  
Boulder Creek 95006 (831) 338-8860



Sequoia Nature Trail

Photo courtesy of Rich MacIntosh



Marbled murrelet

### KEEP THE PARK CRUMB-CLEAN!

Jays, ravens, and crows are attracted to areas where campers and picnickers leave food behind. These birds also eat the eggs and chicks of

an endangered seabird that nests in these trees. The marbled murrelet nests in coastal old-growth redwood and Douglas-fir forests and lays just one egg per year. To make this a safer place for murrelets nesting in this park, all visitors are asked to follow the park's crumb-clean credo: leave no food out, not even a crumb. A murrelet chick's first flight takes it on a solo journey directly to the ocean. You can help a baby murrelet make it to the sea by keeping the park, campsites, and trails crumb-clean.

### LEOPARD LILY

Showy leopard lilies bloom from May to July along streams and trails in the park. This flower (*Lilium pardinalinum*), is named for



Leopard lilies

the leopard-like spots on its petals. They grow in clusters of stout stems 3 to 6 feet high with pale- to deep-green, narrow leaves in whorls. Each stem bears one to many flowers that blaze from yellow or orange to flame red. Hungry hummingbirds and butterflies pollinate the lilies as they sip the nourishing nectar. The seed pods are held upright like a salt shaker and contain hundreds of seeds, but very few of these ever make it to the ground before the flowers are eaten by deer.



