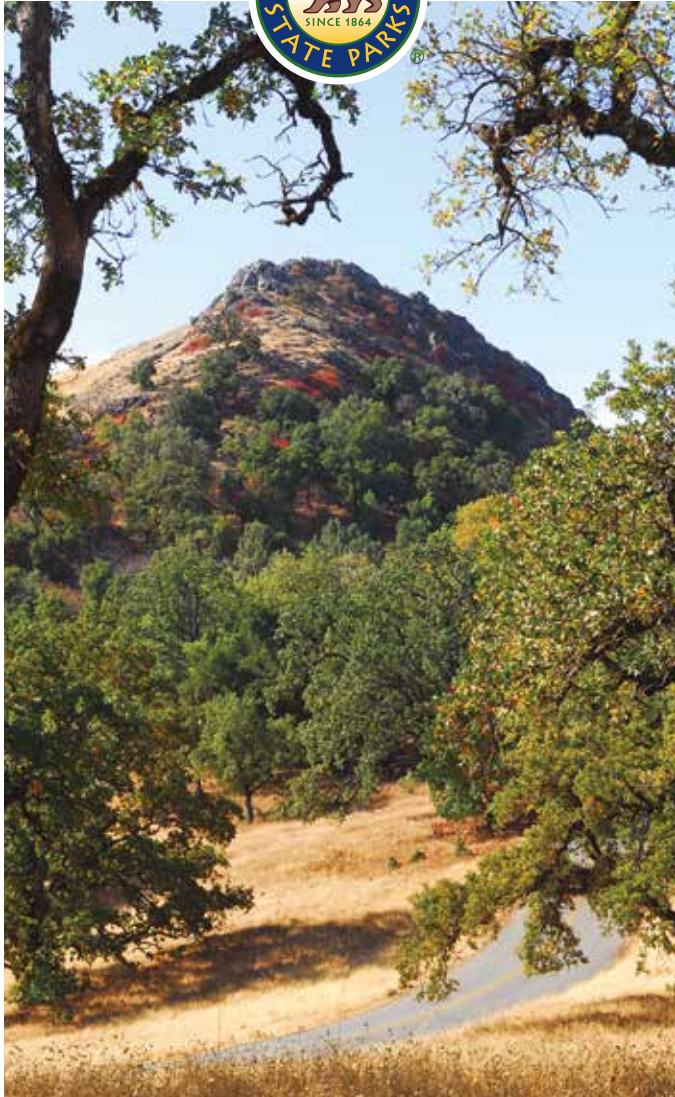


# Fremont Peak

## 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 **(831) 623-4526**. If you need this publication in an alternate format, contact [interp@parks.ca.gov](mailto:interp@parks.ca.gov).

#### CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

P.O. Box 942896

Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

For information call: (800) 777-0369

(916) 653-6995, outside the U.S.

711, TTY relay service

[www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)

#### Fremont Peak State Park

San Juan Canyon Road off Hwy. 156

San Juan Bautista, CA 95045

**(831) 623-4526 • Observatory: 623-2465**

Latitude 36.7602° Longitude -121.503°

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*At the peak,  
visitors enjoy a  
360-degree view  
during the day;  
the night sky provides  
a visual feast  
for stargazers.*





*Poison oak leaves turn red in fall.*

**A**t **Fremont Peak State Park**, spring and fall are the most colorful seasons. Magnificent vistas of Monterey Bay and the Salinas and San Benito valleys are incomparable from the 3,169-foot peak. Also visible are the Santa Cruz, Diablo, and Gavilan ranges, and the Santa Lucia Mountains. On a clear day, one may spot the Sierra Nevada Range. At night, constellations and galaxies not visible in light-polluted city skies dazzle the eye.

The weather here is changeable. Summer temperatures can reach 90 degrees during the day, and at night they can drop to as low as 50 degrees, depending on the fog layer. Winter conditions may include dense fog, ice, and occasional snow.

The 159-acre park is off State Highway 156, about 45 miles from San Jose or 11 miles south of San Juan Bautista. San Juan Canyon Road is paved, but it winds through canyons and over ridges; trailers or vehicles over 25 feet in length are not recommended.

## **PARK HISTORY**

### **Native People**

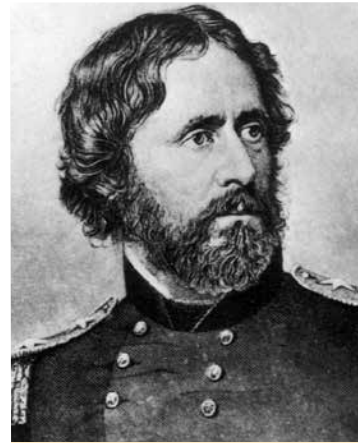
For thousands of years, the Ohlone people (also known as “Costanoan”) lived in this area. Ethnographers vary on the number of native people but estimate that there were at least 50 villages. Residents of these villages spoke different dialects of the Penutian language.

In 1769 the native people’s lives were disrupted by the arrival of Spanish missionaries and soldiers who came to colonize the area and bring the native people into the mission system. The next several decades saw a drastic decline in the native population due to food shortages, crowded conditions, and epidemics of diseases to which the Ohlone had no immunity. By 1850, fewer than ten percent of the Ohlone people remained.

Today there are more than 1,600 Ohlone people on tribal membership rolls. By studying records of their spoken dialects, several Ohlone groups are reviving their traditional languages.

### **WHY IS IT CALLED FREMONT PEAK?**

In 1846, while California was still part of Mexico, Army Captain John C. Frémont of the Topographic Engineers led a small exploratory force to California, arriving in the Salinas Valley in March.



*John C. Frémont*

Suspicious of Frémont’s motives, Mexican Commandante General José Castro ordered him to leave the settled areas of California immediately. Frémont, believing that Castro had previously granted him verbal permission to remain, refused. Sensing an incident was coming, Frémont’s party headed up to a nearby peak, where they built a makeshift fort and raised a U.S. military flag. Castro, meanwhile, assembled a group of 200 soldiers in nearby San Juan Bautista.

In Monterey, U.S. Consul Thomas O. Larkin attempted to intervene in order to avoid a conflict. After several days, Frémont decided to leave his encampment as he undoubtedly realized his precarious position. A powerful windstorm blew down the flagpole and may have provided Frémont further impetus to abandon the summit.

During the Mexican-American war, Frémont led the California Battalion, but in 1847 U.S. General Stephen W. Kearny censured him for his “conduct in California.” Frémont was arrested, court-martialed, and found guilty of mutiny, disobedience, and “conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline.” President James K. Polk later removed the charge of mutiny, and Frémont became a U.S. Senator representing California’s Mariposa area. In 1856, he ran unsuccessfully for president.

As early as 1890, the raising of the flag by Frémont was celebrated on Fremont Peak. The Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West placed a commemorative plaque there in 1926. While some scholarship



*Interior live oak leaves*

places the event on another summit, Fremont Peak has remained the place of commemoration. The area became a state park in 1936.

### NATURAL HISTORY

The northern slopes of Fremont Peak State Park are covered with manzanita, scrub oak, toyon, *Alligator lizard* and coyote brush. On southern exposures, open grasslands turn green in spring and golden brown in summer and fall.

Turkey vultures soar above the canyons, as do the hawks that give the Gavilan Mountain Range its Spanish name. The trees and brush are alive with birds, including chickadees, finches, hummingbirds, thrushes, and woodpeckers. Visitors may also see coyotes, snakes, bobcats, raccoons, alligator lizards, and foxes.

### THE OBSERVATORY

Light pollution from urban areas can reduce views of the night sky's wonders. On Fremont Peak, however, a coastal marine layer of clouds often masks light from lower elevations, permitting a splendid view of stars and constellations. Volunteer astronomers began giving evening talks at Fremont Peak in 1986.

Today, visitors can enjoy a short program about the current night sky and view its starry wonders from the observatory's 30-inch-diameter telescope. Astronomy programs take place from April through October on Saturday evenings without a full moon. It is best to arrive before sunset;



*Alligator lizard*

the brightness of vehicle headlights or flashlights limits observation and disrupts astronomers' night vision. Visit [www.fpoa.net](http://www.fpoa.net) for a program schedule.

### RECREATION

Visitors and campers can picnic and watch birds among the pine and oak woodlands or walk along four miles of moderate trails. Drinking water is available at the park.

Twenty-five primitive, oak-shaded campsites with views of Monterey Bay have tables, fire rings, and pit toilets. One group site holds 50 campers. To make individual or group camping reservations, call (800) 444-7275 or visit [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov).

### ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

Tent Camping: Campsite 13 in Valley View Campground and campsites 17 and 19 in Oak Point Campground are accessible. Accessible vault restrooms are nearby. There are no showers. Near the observatory building, one accessible restroom is available and a parking spot upon request. A ramp leads to the observatory.

### PLEASE REMEMBER

- Operating hours are from 8 a.m. to ½ hour after sunset.
- Parents are asked to supervise children around the telescopes.
- Do not touch any part of any telescope, especially glass optical surfaces, unless the telescope's owner instructs you on proper handling methods.
- To use flashlights, cover the ends with red cellophane held by a rubber band.



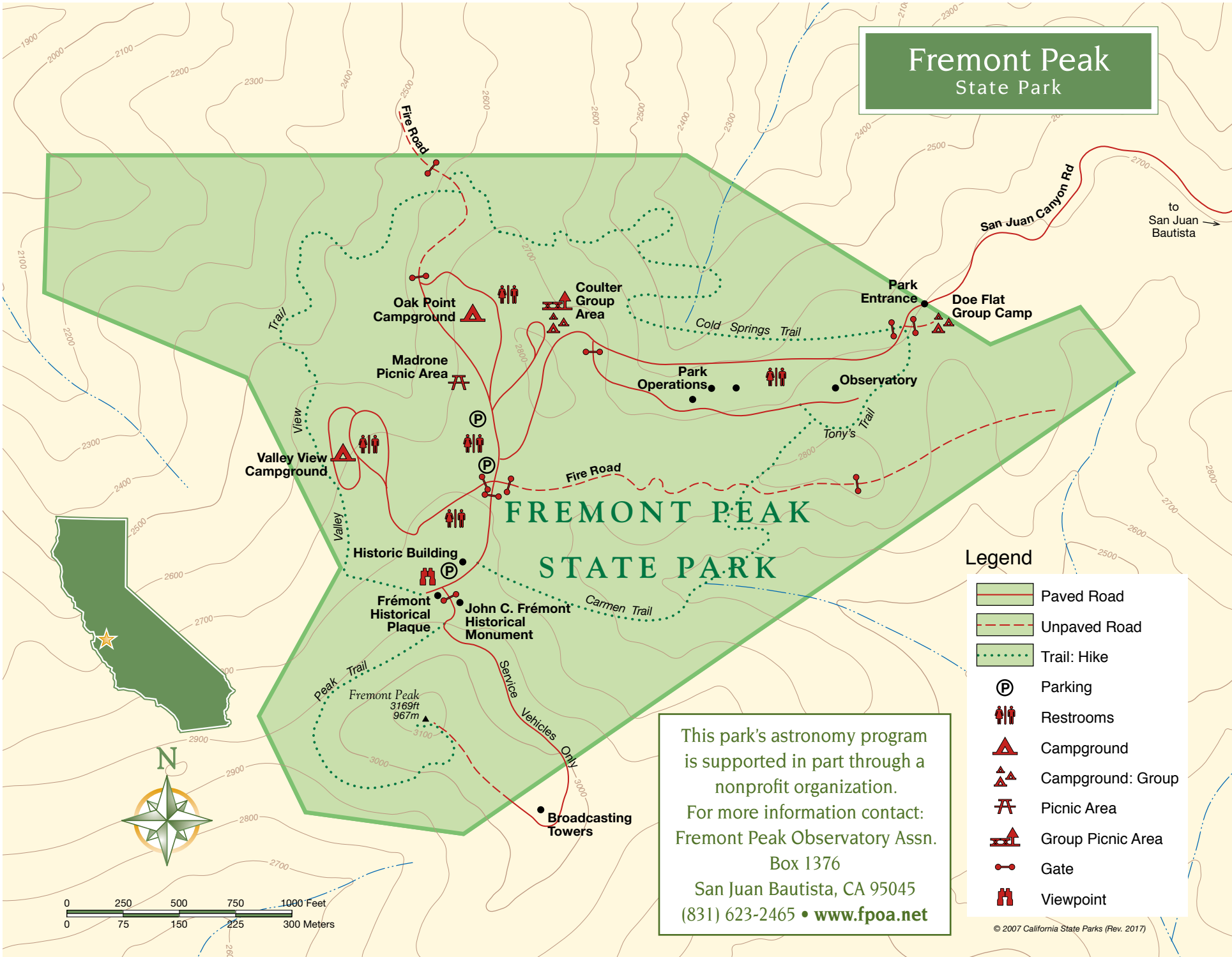
*Oak trees provided acorns for the Ohlone.*

### NEARBY STATE PARKS

- San Juan Bautista State Historic Park  
2nd and Washington Streets, San Juan Bautista (831) 623-4881/(831) 623-4526
- Hollister Hills State Vehicular Rec. Area  
7800 Cienega Road, Hollister 95023  
(831) 637-3874



# Fremont Peak State Park



## Legend

- Paved Road
- Unpaved Road
- Trail: Hike
- Parking
- Restrooms
- Campground
- Campground: Group
- Picnic Area
- Group Picnic Area
- Gate
- Viewpoint

This park's astronomy program is supported in part through a nonprofit organization. For more information contact: Fremont Peak Observatory Assn. Box 1376 San Juan Bautista, CA 95045 (831) 623-2465 • [www.fpoa.net](http://www.fpoa.net)