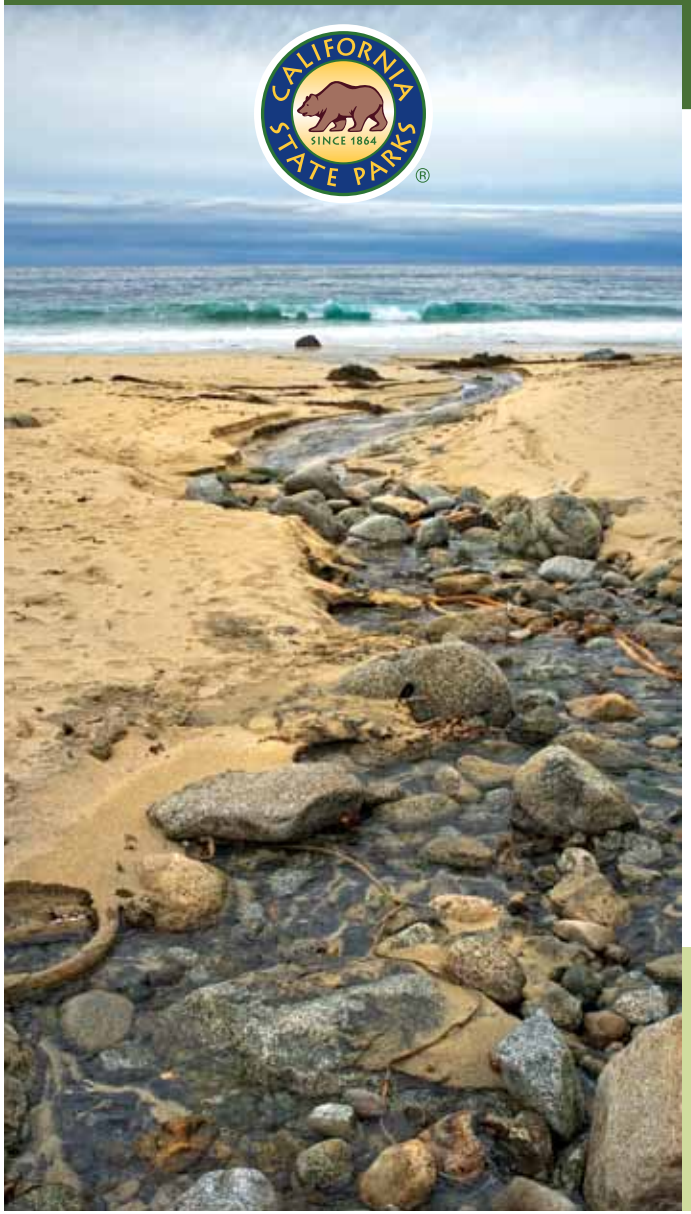
Garrapata

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 office at (831) 649-2836. This publication can be made available in alternate formats. Contact **interp@parks.ca.gov** or call (916) 654-2249.

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Garrapata State Park
Highway 1, 7 miles south of
Carmel 93923
18 miles north of Big Sur
(831) 649-2836

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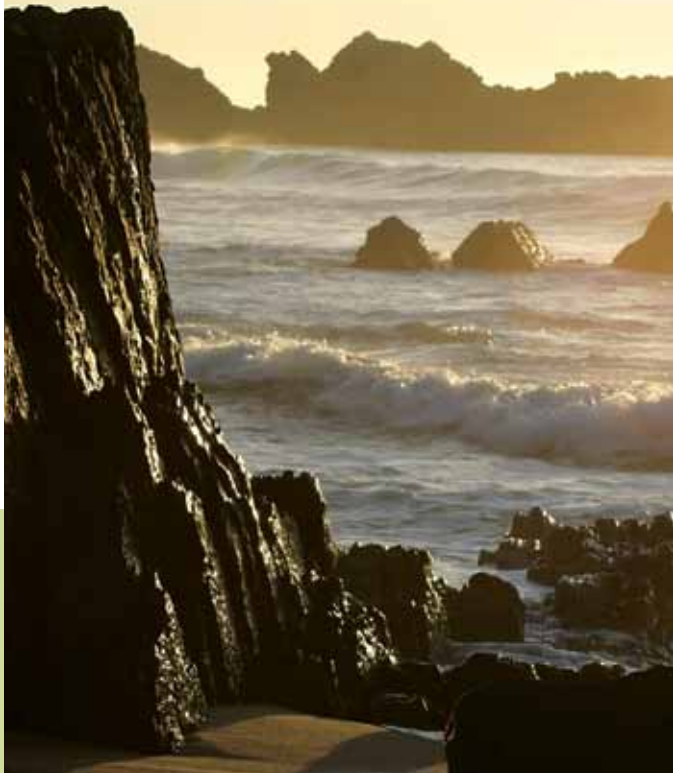
Nestled at the base of the Santa Lucia Range, Garrapata's 2,939 acres encompass a spectacular rocky shoreline next to a beautiful inland area of steep mountains and deep redwood canyons.



Welcome to Garrapata State Park, where the jagged shoreline plays counterpoint to a mountainous inland area punctuated by redwood-filled canyons. The park is on the northern end of the Big Sur coast, three miles south of Point Lobos State Natural Reserve on Highway 1.

The coastal climate is moderate, with a mean average of 50–65 degrees year-round. Variable weather includes cool, foggy mornings, strong onshore winds, and hot summer days in the backcountry.

PARK HISTORY

Native Americans

Until the mid- to late 1700s, the dominant group here was the Costanoan people, now known as the Ohlone. About 10,000 Ohlone lived in the area south of San Francisco Bay to south of Monterey Bay and east to the Central Valley. The land and sea provided well for the Costanoans; what they had in abundance, they traded for items they could not obtain locally.

In the late 1700s, the introduction of the Spanish mission system altered the Costanoan lifeways significantly. Some went willingly to the missions, but many entered the mission system as a last resort when the loss of their lands, reduced access to food sources, and the disruption of community networks left them little alternative.

By 1830, conditions at the missions and Costanoans' lack of immunity to European diseases had reduced their numbers to about 2,500. Despite these drastic changes, many descendants of the Ohlone still live in the area and are reviving their language, traditional songs, dances, stories and crafts.

Soberanes Family

In 1839, this area was part of Rancho San José y Sur Chiquito, a large Mexican land grant that was later divided. William B. Post acquired two 160-acre parcels, living on the land between 1858 and 1866. In 1867 he sold his land to David Castro, who sold it the following year to Ezequiel Soberanes. Soberanes operated a prosperous cattle and sheep ranch for 24 years. The Soberanes family, locally famed for their musical talents, also offered their hospitality to other ranchers traveling along the coast to Monterey.

The Doud Ranch

Francis Doud, an early Monterey resident, purchased the Soberanes land and other parcels in 1891 to create the Doud Ranch, which ran cattle until the early 1950s. The family's wood-frame ranch house burned to the ground in the 1960s. The State acquired its first parcel of the property in 1980; Garrapata (Spanish for *tick*) was classified a state park in 1985.

NATURAL HISTORY

Garrapata's bold, vertical headlands and offshore sea stacks are a combination of granitic rock, marine sandstone, shale, volcanic rock and chert. Their proximity to several fault lines makes them susceptible to seismic movement.

Plant and Animal Communities

Garrapata's diverse terrain supports several plant communities and animal habitats.

Scrub—Coastal bluffs host scrub vegetation. Northern bluff scrub includes lizard tail and mock heather. Central coast scrub is dominated by coyote brush, California sagebrush, sticky monkeyflower and poison oak. California sagebrush and black sage grow on the rockier inland slopes. The endangered Smith's blue butterfly spends its entire life on or near seacliff buckwheat.

Grassland—Most of the grasses at Garrapata are non-native European annual grasses that were introduced through cattle grazing. Near the Rocky Ridge Trail, native plants such as California oatgrass, purple needlegrass, California brome and blue wild rye grow among the non-native grasses. The area is home to the black-shouldered kite, peregrine falcon and American kestrel. Beechey ground squirrels and Brewer's blackbirds live among annual grasses.

Brown pelican

Mixed evergreen forest—Coast redwoods dominate parts of Soberanes and Malpaso creeks, where spotted owls live. Giant chain fern, redwood sorrel, California spikenard and western coltsfoot form a typical understory. Conifers, big leaf maples and white alders shelter gray squirrels, Merriam chipmunks and numerous bird species. Several species of willow and coyote brush grow along the lower portions of Soberanes and Doud creeks and intermittent streams in the coastal area. The coastal oak woodland shelters 60 species of mammals and 110 species of birds.

On some north-facing slopes, tanoak, madrone and buckeye mix with coast redwoods. Song sparrows, small burrowing rodents and common garter snakes live here.

MARINE HABITAT

The cold waters of Monterey Bay are rich with invertebrate organisms that are a food source for the area's whales, pinnipeds and seabirds. On the Lobos Rocks, California brown pelicans roost above resting sea lions. Southern sea otters bob about in the offshore kelp forest, enjoying the legally protected waters of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and the California Sea Otter Game Refuge.

HIKING

The Rocky Ridge Trail, on the north ridge of Soberanes Canyon, is a strenuous hike that joins the Peak Trail to Doud Peak. The three-mile round-trip Soberanes Point Trail loops around the Point, with a spur trail leading to Whale Peak.

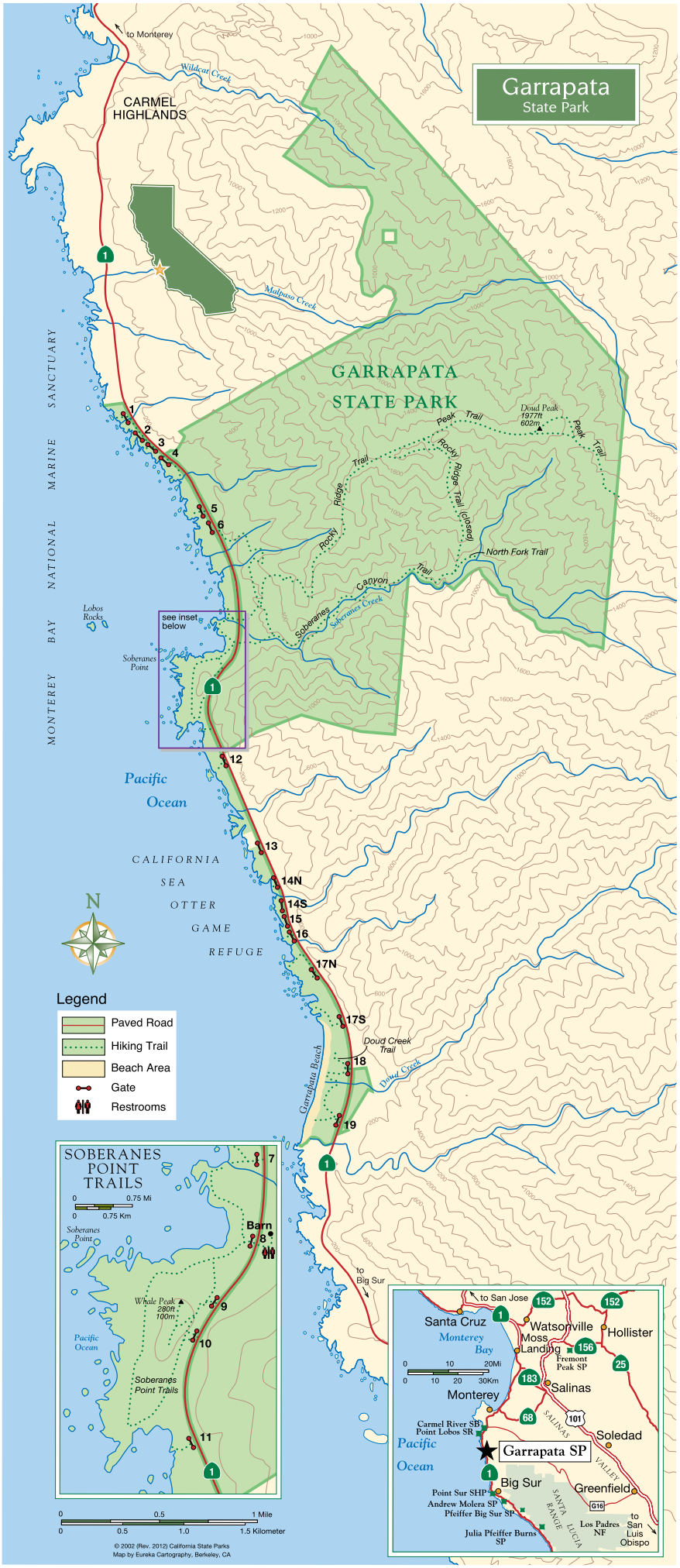
GETTING THERE

Parking and trails are reached via several numbered turnouts along Highway 1. All are on the ocean side of the highway. Numbered placards represent gate numbers as follows:

Garrapata Beach—gates 18 or 19
Soberanes Point trails—gates 8, 9 or 10
Backcountry trails—The trailheads for the Rocky Ridge Trail and the Soberanes Canyon Trail are on the east side of Highway 1 across from gates 7 and 8, respectively.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

Accessibility is continually improving, but there are currently no wheelchair-accessible features at this park. For updates, visit **http://access.parks.ca.gov**.



PLEASE REMEMBER

- The surf is extremely dangerous. Do not swim, wade, or climb on rocks or cliffs. Scuba diving is not recommended.
- Camping is not permitted.
- Rattlesnakes, ticks and mountain lions live here—walk only on established trails.
- Dogs are allowed only on Garrapata Beach; they must be kept on a six-foot leash at all times. Service animals are allowed in all areas of the park.
- Fires are not permitted.
- All natural and cultural features are protected by state law.
- The park closes at sunset.

NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Carmel River State Beach
  Carmelo Street and Scenic Road
  Carmel (831) 624-4909
- Point Lobos State Natural Reserve, 3 miles south of Carmel on Hwy. 1 (831) 624-4909
- Point Sur State Historic Park
  Hwy. 1, 19 miles south of Carmel
  (831) 625-4419
  Guided tours only; call for details.
- Andrew Molera State Park
  Hwy. 1, 21 miles south of Carmel
  (831) 667-2315