Hearst San Simeon
State Park and Historical Monument

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 **(805) 927-2035**. If you need this publication in an alternate format, contact **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

Discover the many states of California.™

Hearst San Simeon State Park and State Historical Monument
750 Hearst Castle Road
San Simeon, CA 93452 (805) 927-2010

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"I love this ranch. It is wonderful. I love the sea and I love the mountains and the hollows in the hills and the shady places in the creeks and the fine old oaks and even the hot brushy hillsides . . . I would rather spend a month here than any place in the world."

- William Randolph Hearst, in a letter to his mother, Phoebe Apperson Hearst

Hearst San Simeon State Park and Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument® preserve more than 20 miles of dramatic central California coastline. Located 35 miles north of San Luis Obispo along scenic Highway 1, the parks frame shoreline vistas of beaches, rocky promontories, and magnificent views of the Santa Lucia Mountains and Hearst Castle®.

The Mediterranean climate is typically mild, with average daytime highs of 69 degrees and evening lows of 42 degrees. Rain is most likely from January through March. Spring and summer are pleasant during the day, cooling in the evening as wind moves fog in from the ocean.

NATURAL HISTORY

The diverse habitats of these two parks include wetlands, seashore, grassland, coastal scrub, and riparian areas. Offshore, four state marine protected areas conserve underwater resources. Cambria State Marine Park became California State Parks' first classified state marine park in 2010.

Geology

This part of the coastline consists mostly of geologically young alluvial sediment and older marine terrace deposits. In the park, Cambria slab sandstone—visible at Leffingwell Landing—becomes Franciscan mélange toward the north. The mélange material is a mixture of sandstone, chert, basalt, greenstone, serpentine, shale, eclogite, and blueschist. This assemblage contains all three rock types—igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic—and has a very jumbled appearance.

Low, rolling mima mounds, a unique geological feature in some of the park's grasslands, are found near vernal pools—seasonal pools with abundant plant and animal life.

Wildlife

Bobcats and coyotes hunt for brush rabbits, gray tree squirrels, and California ground squirrels; black-tail deer graze on hillsides. Sensitive species include California red-legged frogs, tidewater gobies, steelhead trout, Western snowy plovers, golden eagles, and longbilled curlews. From November to February, monarch butterflies roost in the Monterey pines.

Bird watchers will be amazed by the diverse number of birds to see at the beach, in the wetlands, and along the trails.

Look for black phoebes, white-tailed kites, mergansers, egrets, and black oystercatchers.

Low tides reveal tide pools with seastars, chitons, limpets, turban snails, barnacles, and fish. Please leave the plants and animals of the tide pools undisturbed; they are vulnerable to human impact and are protected by law.

From December to April, gray whales migrate past this stretch of coastline on their way to and from feeding grounds in Alaska to birthing waters in Mexico.

Young elephant seal napping

Don't miss the fascinating northern elephant seals. From December to March, they can easily be seen resting, having pups, battling, and mating on the beach up the road from San Simeon Bay at scenic vista points on the coast side of Highway 1.

Plants

Native plant communities include riparian, wetland, Monterey pine forest, oak woodland, coastal sage scrub, chaparral, coastal strand, and grassland. Look for willow, coast live oak, cottonwood, wax myrtle, blackberry bushes, and a great display of seasonal wildflowers. Take a hike through the Monterey pine forest—one of only five native groups left in the world—on the Hearst San Simeon State Park Nature Trail, reachable from the campground and the Washburn day-use area.

The park is home to rare and endangered plants, including maritime ceanothus, dwarf goldenstars, Arroyo de la Cruz manzanita, adobe sanicle, Hickman's onion, Blochman's dudleya, and Arroyo de la Cruz mariposa lily. Prairie grasslands are among the area's native plant communities.

Arroyo de la Cruz manzanita

AREA HISTORY

Native People

Archaeological evidence suggests that ancestors of today's Chumash and Salinan people inhabited this part of the coast for thousands of years, adapting to climatic and environmental changes. They traveled from the coast to the interior valleys, following the abundant marine and terrestrial resources. Their diet included fish, shellfish, wild game, waterfowl, and the grasses and seeds found inland.

Clothing, shelter, and tools were made from resources available in the immediate area; the natives traded other groups for those goods that could not be procured or produced locally.

Settlement and Enterprise

In 1769 the first European overland expedition, led by Gaspar de Portolá, made its way up the coast of California, clearing the way for Spanish missionaries. The mission system brought drastic, permanent change in the lifeways of the indigenous people, who now had to adopt new means of subsistence.

Local missions included Mission San Antonio de Padua (1771), with an outpost at San Carpoforo Creek; Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa (1772), within 50 miles; and Mission San Miguel Arcángel (1779), with an outpost at San Simeon.

The typical mission landscape included ranch stations, aqueducts, quarries, kilns, crop lands, and grazing. In some areas, entire native plant communities were destroyed by the heavy grazing of mission livestock.

In 1833 Mexican government officials began to give out the newly secularized mission holdings as land grants. They divided the former mission properties into three ranchos: Piedra Blanca, Santa Rosa, and San Simeon. Cattle ranching was still the major enterprise, as it had been during the mission period.

Taking advantage of gray whales' annual migration between Baja California and Alaska, Portuguese whaler Joseph Clark set up a whaling station at San Simeon Bay in 1852. From December to April, whale spotters on the bluffs watched for the white plumes of spray as a whale surfaced. Small boats were then launched to capture the whale and haul it into the station for processing. At the peak of the whaling period, 45 buildings—including a general store, a blacksmith shop, a barbershop, and a saloon—stood at San Simeon, and 22 families lived on the point. The whaling station's general store is the only building dating back to San Simeon's whaling days.

San Simeon

Roads into this remote section of the coast were almost nonexistent until about 1850.

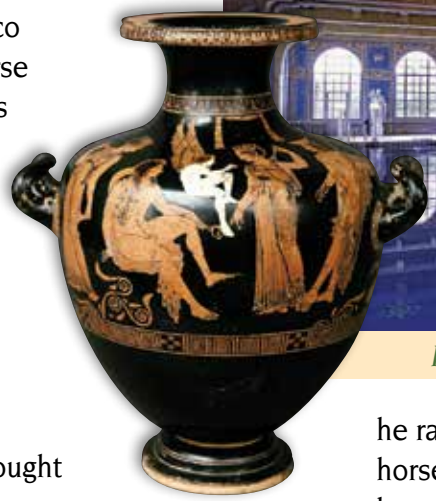
Sailing vessels and steamships stopped at San Simeon to deliver freight and load cargoes of mining and agricultural equipment for delivery to San Francisco and Los Angeles. Around 1850, the horse trail between San Simeon and San Luis Obispo was expanded, allowing small carts to take agricultural products to San Simeon for shipment. However, the trail was passable only in dry weather, and shipping by steamer continued for another 20 years.

Later, gasoline-powered trucks and railroad service to San Luis Obispo brought about changes in shipping patterns. By 1915 the practice of shipping by steamer had ended. In 1937 the highway now known as California State Route One was completed.

The Hearst Family

In 1850 Missourian George Hearst, drawn by the gold rush, arrived in California with mining experience. He staked several claims throughout the West. Although Hearst managed several other types of businesses around the state, he made his fortune from the Comstock, Homestake, Ontario, and Anaconda mines. In 1865 Hearst began acquiring the land that would become the Hearst Ranch, where he raised cattle and race horses. That year Mr. Hearst became a member of the California State Assembly, and was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1886. When he died in 1891, his wife Phoebe Apperson Hearst inherited Rancho Piedra Blanca, later adding more property that had once been the whaling station. The Hearsts' only child, William Randolph, inherited the ranch property upon Phoebe's death in 1919.

George Hearst



Greek hydria, 5th century B.C.

Roman Pool at Hearst Castle

William Randolph Hearst—newspaper publisher, movie producer, and art collector—built the historic estate called Hearst Castle. On a San Simeon hilltop overlooking the Pacific Ocean, *La Cuesta Encantada* (Spanish for "The Enchanted Hill," as Mr. Hearst called it) was created by Mr. Hearst and world-renowned architect Julia Morgan. Construction—begun in 1919 and continuing until 1947—was not fully completed before Hearst's death in 1951.

PARK HISTORY

During the mission era, the area of Hearst San Simeon State Park and Historical Monument served as an access point for goods shipped to and from Monterey's Mission San Antonio. In 1932 the State acquired more than 500 acres of beach and inland parcels from local ranchers to establish the state park. The park's Washburn Day-Use Area was a gravel quarry until the late 1920s.

In 2005 Hearst Corporation donated 1,131 additional acres, expanding the California Coastal Trail and protecting this exceptional example of California's biological diversity, natural and cultural resources, and unmatched scenery.

HEARST CASTLE®

The estate houses a world-renowned collection of art. William Randolph Hearst also built landscaped gardens and a private zoo on the property. Descendants of some of the zoo animals, including zebras, can sometimes be seen today grazing on the green hillsides of nearby Hearst Ranch, still privately owned.

Donated to the State in December 1957 by Hearst Corporation, the estate was opened to the public on June 2, 1958. For information, see **www.parks.ca.gov/hearstcastle.**

Hearst Castle, an accredited member of the American Alliance of Museums, offers guided, year-round tours. Call (800) 444-4445 or visit **www.hearstcastle.org** for tour reservations.

Tide pooling

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Many activities are available, including a trip to the Hearst Castle Visitor Center, viewing a movie at the Hearst Castle Theater, or taking a tour of the Castle itself. Visitors will also enjoy the Coastal Discovery Center—rich in marine studies and activities. Boardwalks stretching along the coastal areas allow visitors to enjoy the wildlife, including the elephant seals.

Additional activities include camping, hiking, picnicking, walking the beach, photography, windsurfing, kayaking, fishing, surfing, and tide pooling. For camping reservations, call 800-444-7275 or visit **www.parks.ca.gov/hearstsansimeonsp**.

PARTNERSHIPS

Look for **Friends of the Elephant Seal** volunteers to learn about elephant seals. Part of a nonprofit cooperating association that interprets and protects elephant seals, the blue-jacketed volunteers can be found at the elephant seal vista points. See **www.elephantseal.org.**

One of the world's most diverse marine ecosystems, the **Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary** (MBNMS) encompasses a shoreline length of 276 miles from Cambria to Monterey, with 5,322 square miles of ocean. The sanctuary protects the coastal resources and offers such recreation as kite surfing, kayaking, boating, surfing, and fishing.

California State Parks and the MBNMS jointly operate the Coastal Discovery Center at San Simeon Bay, across the road from Hearst Castle. Volunteers will orient you to the natural and cultural resources of Hearst San Simeon State Park and the sanctuary. Call (805) 927-6575 or visit the website at **http://montereybay.noaa.gov**.

Visitors to Hearst Castle are surrounded by the **Hearst Ranch**. The 80,000-acre Hearst Ranch is one of the largest working cattle ranches on the coast of California, and one of the largest conservation easements in the U.S. Today, Hearst Ranch specializes in grass-fed beef and has won several awards in the beef industry and for its stewardship of the land. Visit **www.hearstranch.com** for further details.

Piedras Blancas Light Station has been in continual operation since 1875. Owned and operated by the Bureau of Land Management since 2001, the light station is still in use as a navigational aid and for scientific research. To learn about public tours of the Light Station, visit **www.blm.gov**.

California Coastal National Monument manages many of the small, off-coast rocks that are teeming with life. The Bureau of Land Management works with many partners to protect this unique and very fragile ecosystem.

Friends of Hearst Castle (FHC) is a nonprofit cooperating organization that supports preservation and interpretation of the park. Through membership and fundraising, FHC provides funding for educational and interpretive programs and artifact conservation programs. These programs provide visitor appreciation and enjoyment of this unique historical and cultural resource. For specific details, visit **www.friendsofhearstcastle.org**.

Coastal Discovery Center exhibit

Moonstone Boardwalk

PARK PROGRAMS

Interpretive programs include Junior Ranger programs for children ages 7 to 12, guided hikes, and campfire programs. Call (805) 927-2010 for more information.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument
Accessible parking is designated. The ticket and information area, restrooms, visitor center, Hearst Castle Theater, and the gallery are accessible. Accessible tours are provided. Assistive devices, touchable artifacts, and Braille transcripts may be requested. With advance notice, sign language interpreters can be provided. Reservations are highly recommended for the accessible tours.
Elephant Seal Boardwalk—Parking and the seal-viewing boardwalk are accessible.
San Simeon Campground—Three sites have accessibly designed picnic tables, level routes of travel, and restrooms.
Washburn Campground—This undeveloped campground has accessible sites, restrooms, and routes of travel.
Washburn Day-Use Area—Accessible trailhead, boardwalk, parking, and restrooms are available at Washburn.
Moonstone Beach Boardwalk—This accessible one-mile boardwalk follows the coastal bluffs from the northern end of Cambria to the mouth of Santa Rosa Creek.

Accessibility is continually improving. For updates, visit **http://access.parks.ca.gov**.

PLEASE REMEMBER

- **Never approach or feed wildlife.**
- All features of the parks are protected by state law and must not be disturbed.
- Stay on designated trails and paths.
- Watch out for poison oak, which causes an itchy rash.
- Dogs must be on a leash no more than six feet in length in campsites and along park roads. Except for service animals, dogs are not permitted on any beaches or trails other than the Moonstone Beach Boardwalk.
- Only trained service animals are allowed on Hearst Castle tours.
- Restaurants, shopping, service stations, and hotels are located nearby in the towns of San Simeon and Cambria.

NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Harmony Headlands State Park
  18 miles south on Hwy. 1
  Cayucos 93430 (805) 772-7434
- Estero Bluffs State Park
  Hwy.1, Cayucos 93430 (805) 772-7434
- Morro Bay State Park and Museum
  33 miles south, Morro Bay State Park Rd.
  Morro Bay 93442 (805) 772-7434
- Montaña de Oro State Park
  43 miles south, Pecho Valley Road
  Los Osos 93402 (805) 772-7434

What is a Marine Protected Area?

Set aside by the Marine Life Protection Act, California's marine protected areas (MPAs) are geographic marine or estuarine areas that protect or conserve marine life and habitat. Specific regulations apply to each area. Two MPAs lie just offshore from the parks: Piedras Blancas State Marine Reserve and Cambria State Marine Park. To learn more, visit **www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/mpa**.

Hearst San Simeon
State Park and Historical Monument
to Limekiln (40 miles)
to Monterey (90 miles)
Beach Access
San Carpoforo Creek
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
Arroyo Hondo
Arroyo de la Chimos
Arroyo de la Cruz
Beach Access
PIEDRAS BLANCAS SMR
Arroyo del Oso
Old Motel Property
Beach Access
Arroyo del Corral
De La Cruz Rock California Coastal National Monument
Piedras Point
Haystack California Coastal National Monument
Piedras Blancas Light Station (Bureau of Land Management)
Boot and Slipper California Coastal National Monument
Elephant Seal Boardwalk
Beach Access
Pacific Ocean
Adobe Creek
Oak Knoll Creek
Hearst Castle Rd
Arroyo del Puerto
Hearst Castle
HEARST SAN SIMEON STATE HISTORICAL MONUMENT
Hearst Castle Road is only open for tour busses to and from Hearst Castle. Tour information available at Visitor Center.
Old San Simeon
see detail map above
San Simeon Cove
Brokeo Bridge Creek
Little Pico Creek
Pico Creek
HEARST SAN SIMEON STATE PARK
San Simeon Community
Arroyo Del Padre Juan
Van Gordon Creek Road
Beach Access
Beach Access
San Simeon Creek Road
CAMBRIA SMP
Leffingwell Landing Day-Use
Moonstone Beach Dr
Moonstone Beach
Cambria Pines Rd
Santa Rosa Day-Use
see detail map at left
Santa Rosa Creek
Cambria
to San Luis Obispo
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
Los Padres NF
King City
Coalinga
San Lucas
Jolon
Avenal
Hearst San Simeon SP & SHM
Paso Robles
Shandon
Cambria
Harmony Headlands SP
Estero Bluffs SP
Cayucos SB
Morro Strand SB
Morro Bay
Morro Bay SP
Los Osos Oaks SNR
Montaña de Oro SP
Santa Margarita
San Luis Obispo
Pacific Ocean
0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles
0 1 2 3 Kilometers
HEARST SAN SIMEON STATE HISTORICAL MONUMENT
Visitor Center
Hearst Castle Rd
Coastal Discovery Center
OLD SAN SIMEON
SLO San Simeon Rd
to campground
Beach Access
W.R. HEARST MEMORIAL BEACH
Pier
Tidepools
San Simeon Cove
0 0.25 Mi
0 0.4 Km
to Hearst San Simeon SHM
Park Entrance
San Simeon Creek Rd
San Simeon Creek Campground
Washburn Day-Use
Washburn Campground Rd
Washburn Campground
Willow Bridge
Trail
Seasonal Wetland
San Simeon
SAN SIMEON CAMPGROUND
Leffingwell Creek
HEARST SAN SIMEON STATE PARK
Leffingwell Landing Day-Use Area
Moonstone Beach Dr
Cambria Pines Road
Moonstone Boardwalk
Moonstone Beach
Weymouth Street
Santa Rosa Day-Use Area
to Cambria
0 0.25 0.5 Mi
0 0.4 0.8 Km
Legend
Major Road
Paved Road
Unpaved Road
Accessible Trail
Trail
State Park Property
State Marine Park
State Marine Reserve
Accessible Feature
Boat Launch
Boating
Bridge
Call Box
Campground
Campsite Center
Dogs Allowed on Leash
Drinking Water
Fishing
Hike/Bike Campground
Lighthouse
Marsh
No Bicycles Allowed
No Dogs Allowed
Parking
Picnic Area
Post Office
Primitive Campground
Restrooms
RV Sanitation Station
Showers
Trailhead
Viewpoint
Visitor Center
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