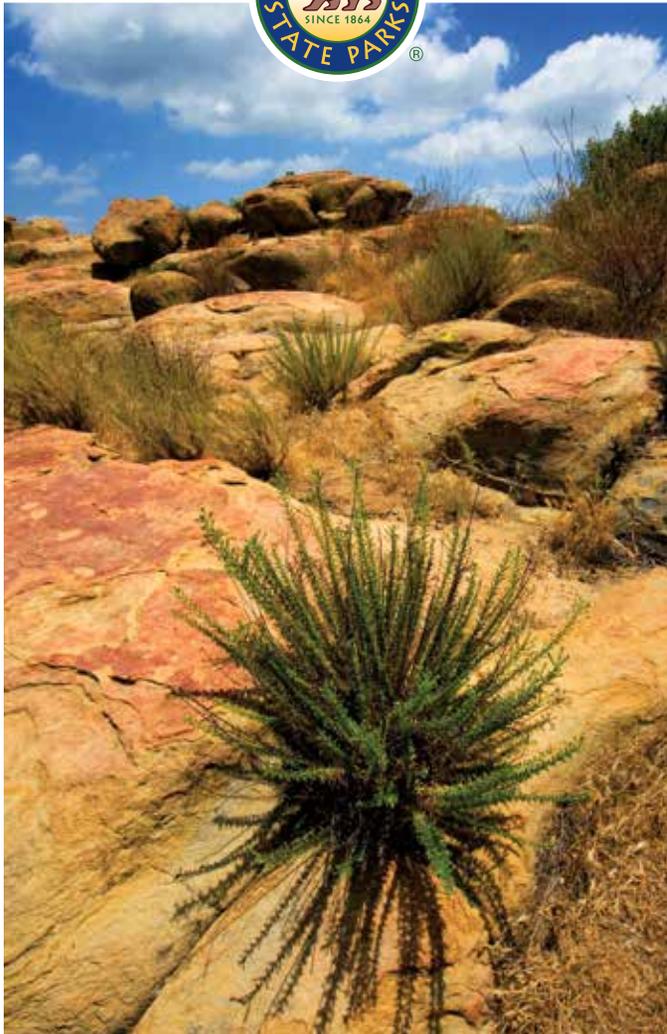


# Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park



## 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 **(818) 784-4849**. 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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**Sacramento, CA 94296-0001**

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### **Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park**

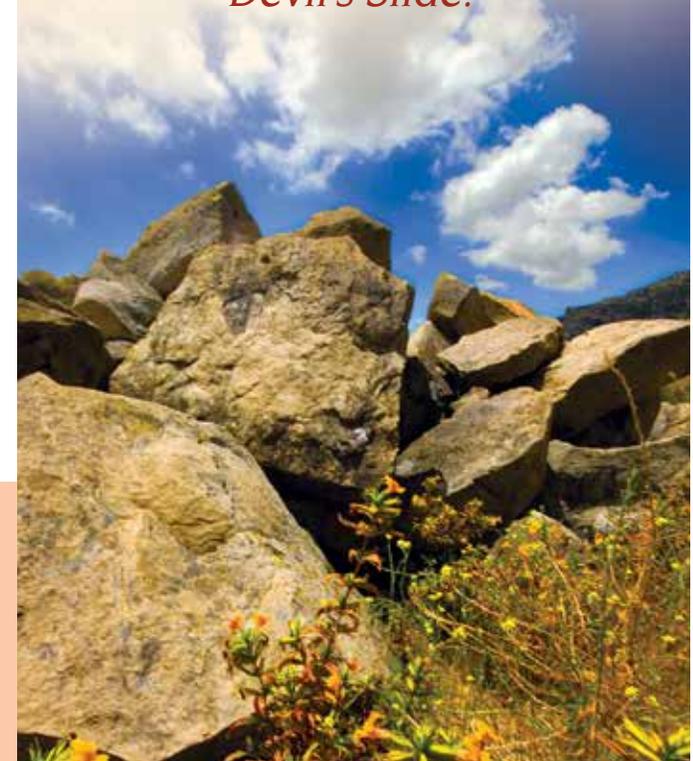
**Chatsworth, CA 91311**

**(818) 784-4849**

[SantaSusana@parks.ca.gov](mailto:SantaSusana@parks.ca.gov)

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*The story of Santa  
Susana Pass includes  
an ancient Native  
American trail, rock  
outcrops used as shelter  
and storage by native  
people, and hair-raising  
stagecoach trips down the  
Devil's Slide.*



**S**anta Susana Pass State Historic Park—where the Simi Hills meet the Santa Susana Mountains—is rich in natural and cultural significance. Its largely undisturbed landscape contains part of a historic transportation corridor between Missions San Buenaventura and San Fernando. The park's Santa Susana Stage Road was once a segment of the famous Butterfield Overland Stage Route, and the road was also used by Wells, Fargo & Company as a route between Los Angeles and Santa Barbara.

## PARK HISTORY

### Native People

Three native groups lived here before European contact—Chumash to the west, Tongva to the east, and to the north, a group called Tataviam.

The sandstone outcrops surrounding the pass provided overhangs for shelter, shallow basins for collecting rainwater, and stone ledges for grinding seeds and acorns. The steep road over the Santa Susana Pass was originally a foot trail linking villages, such as *Momonga* in the San Fernando Valley with *Shimiya* in Simi Valley. In the Ventureño Chumash language, this pass was called *kasi'wey*.

The arrival of Europeans brought diseases such as smallpox and measles, to which the

native people had no resistance. Although large numbers of Chumash, Tongva, and Tataviam people died, descendants of these local native groups still live in the area and have revived many of their cultural traditions.

### Santa Susana Pass

The last Spanish governor of California, Pablo Vicente de Sola, requested laborers from Mission San Fernando to widen and improve the pass to accommodate *carretas* (ox-driven carts), as well as herds of sheep and cattle.

In 1859, the State and local counties funded a contract with James P. Thompson to improve the existing oxcart route to accommodate stagecoaches and flat-bottomed mud wagons. It opened in 1861 as the Coast Stage Line, used by the Butterfield Overland Company to deliver mail between Los Angeles and San Francisco.

The trail's precipitous grade earned it the name "Devil's Slide." Drivers employed various strategies to keep from losing control of the stagecoach. Passengers walked up the steep places carrying rocks to place behind wheels to allow the horses to rest. Downhill, the wheels



*Mud wagon*

were chained together to assist in braking; otherwise, "a streak of fire" would radiate from the brakes rubbing on overheating iron rims.

The Santa Susana Stage Road is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

### The Spahn Ranch

The park's sandstone bedrock gives a wide-open "badlands" look, used as the background for many western films and television programs. The 500-acre Spahn Ranch, located within the park's northern boundary, was one of several "movie ranches" in the area. Between the late 1940s and the late 1960s, dozens of films and television shows—including *The Lone Ranger*, *The Roy Rogers Show*, and *Bonanza* episodes—were filmed here. In 1970, a wildfire destroyed all of the buildings on the former movie ranch.





### NATURAL HISTORY

Panoramic views of the wild landscape provide striking contrast to the developed communities nearby. The western part of the Transverse Ranges is dominated by high, narrow ridges and deep canyons covered with a variety of plant life.

### Geology

The park's distinct sandstone crags are part of the late Cretaceous Chatsworth Formation, formed some 70 million years ago when sediments were shed from uplifting granite mountains into a deep sea debris fan.

### Plant Life

Sandstone rock outcrops shelter the rare Santa Susana tarplant, while the moister slopes support denser vegetation.

Typical shrubs in the canyons include coastal sagebrush, buckwheat, laurel sumac, and chamise. Riparian species such as willow and Mexican elderberry grow well. In larger riparian channels, coast live oak, California walnut, and sycamore create a dense canopy. Spring rains produce mariposa lilies, maroon monkey flowers, and wild lilacs.

### Wildlife

Birds, reptiles, and mammals take advantage of the park's diverse plant communities, available groundwater, and unusual geologic features. The

terrain is part of an important wildlife corridor connecting the San Gabriel, Santa Susana, and Santa Monica mountain ranges. Mule deer, bobcats, coyotes, gray foxes, and even mountain lions can be seen.

### Climate

May through November is usually hot and dry. Cold, rainy winters can send torrents of water over the bedrock, bringing to life intermittent streams and seasonal waterfalls in the park's upper reaches. Stream channels can flood in heavy rains.

### PLEASE REMEMBER

- Trailhead entrances: 10200 block Larwin Ave. and 9860 block Andora Ave., Chatsworth 91311; 7700 block Lilac Ln., Simi Valley 93063
- Park legally in residential areas. Do not park on Santa Susana Pass Road.
- No motor vehicles are allowed in the park.
- Do not disturb natural or cultural features.
- Alcohol consumption is prohibited.
- Weapons are not permitted in the park.
- Fires are prohibited due to wildfire danger.
- Carry and drink plenty of water. Summer temperatures usually reach 100 degrees.
- Do not hike alone. Tell someone where you are going and when you will return.
- Carry a cell phone to call 911 for emergencies.
- Stay away from all railroad tracks and tunnels.
- Contact staff for a schedule of interpretive activities and volunteer opportunities.

### RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

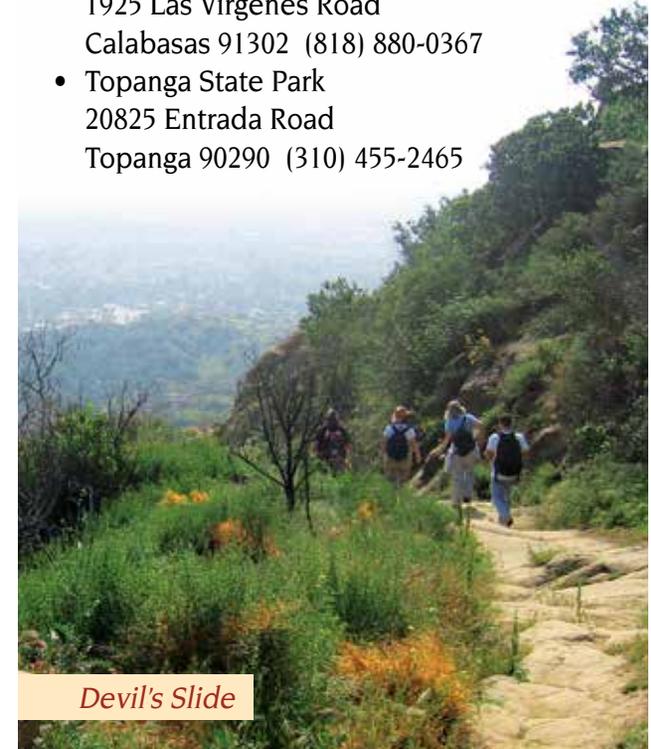
**Trails**—Hike, mountain bike, or ride horses on marked multi-use trails. Most other trails are restricted to hiker and equestrian use only. Dogs on leash are allowed on trails.

### ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

Currently no wheelchair-accessible features or restrooms are available. Accessibility is continually improving. Visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov> for updates.

### NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Los Encinos State Historic Park  
16756 Moorpark St.  
Encino 91436 (818) 784-4849
- Malibu Creek State Park  
1925 Las Virgenes Road  
Calabasas 91302 (818) 880-0367
- Topanga State Park  
20825 Entrada Road  
Topanga 90290 (310) 455-2465

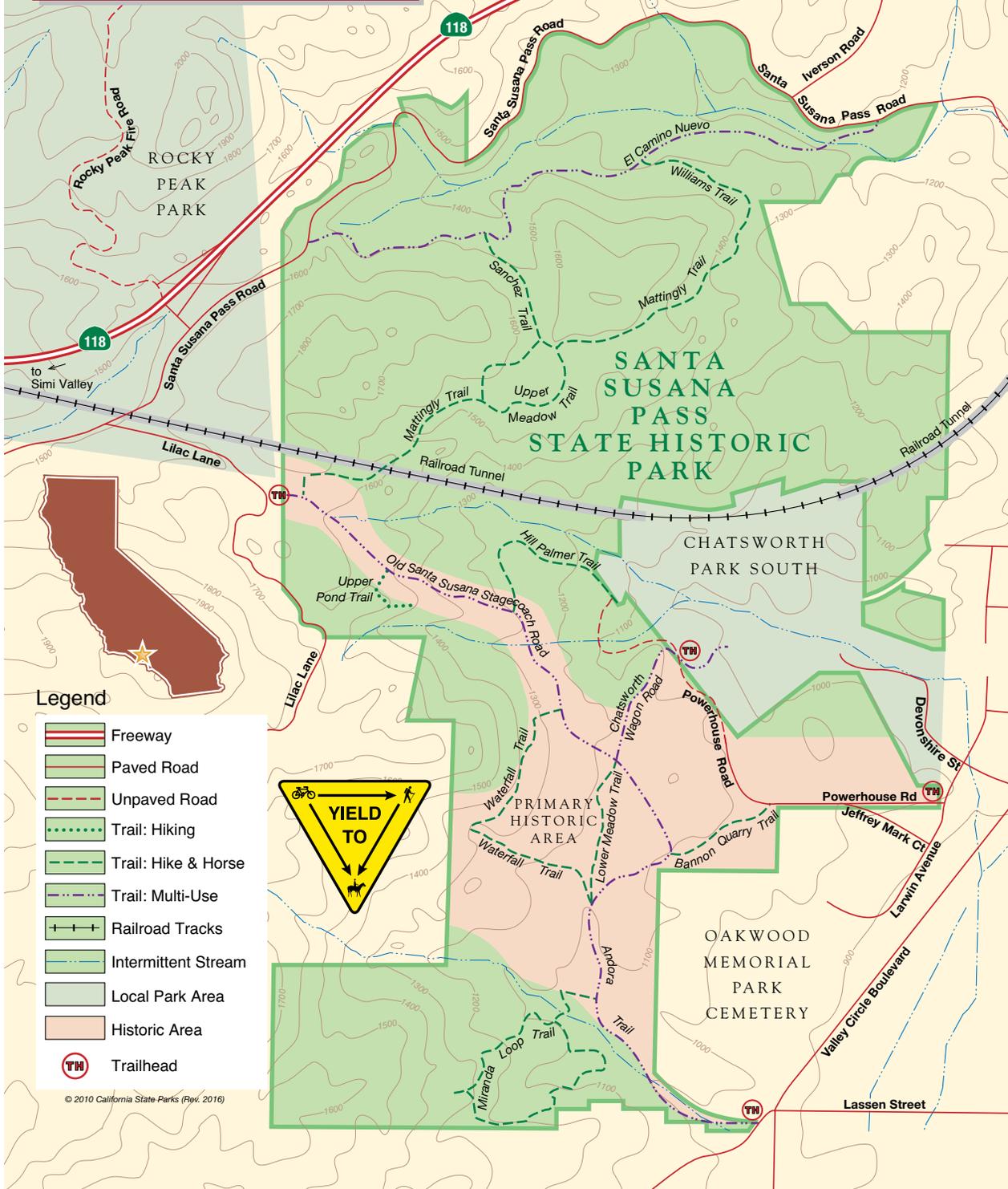


*Devil's Slide*

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Chatsworth, CA 91313  
<http://fpssm.org>

Brochure funding  
from California State Parks Foundation

# Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park



## Legend

- Freeway
- Paved Road
- Unpaved Road
- Trail: Hiking
- Trail: Hike & Horse
- Trail: Multi-Use
- Railroad Tracks
- Intermittent Stream
- Local Park Area
- Historic Area
- Trailhead

