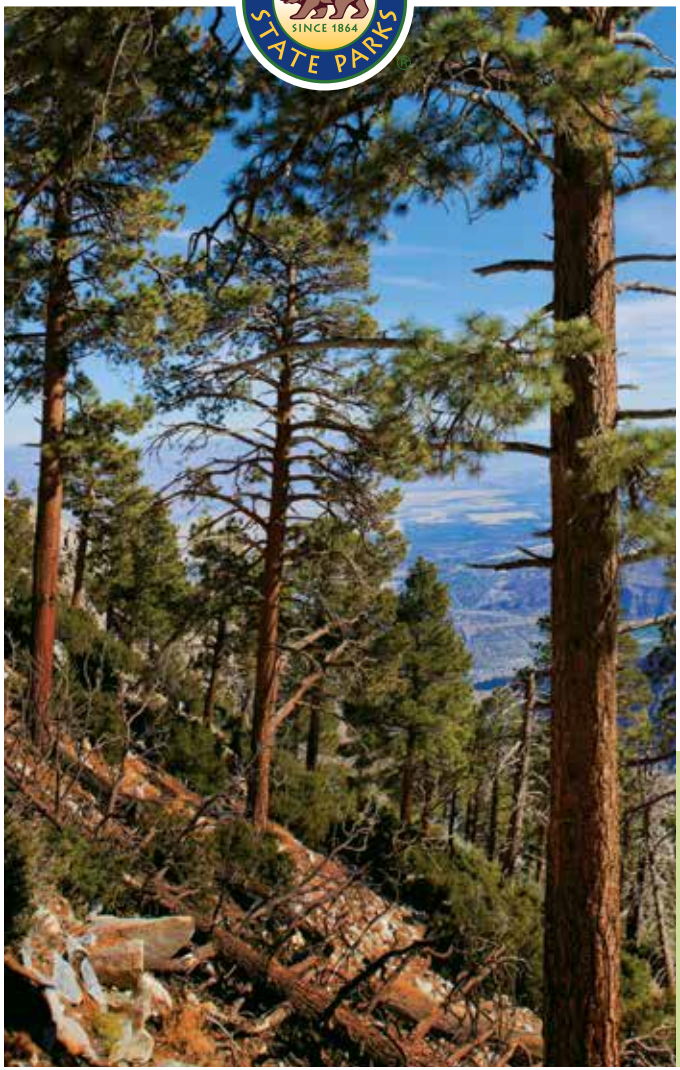
Mount San Jacinto

State Park and Wilderness



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 **(951) 659-2607**. If you need this publication in an alternate format, contact **interp@parks.ca.gov**.

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(916) 653-6995, outside the U.S.
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Mount San Jacinto State Park
25905 Highway 243 (mail: P.O. Box 308)
Idyllwild, CA 92549
(951) 659-2607
www.parks.ca.gov/msjsp

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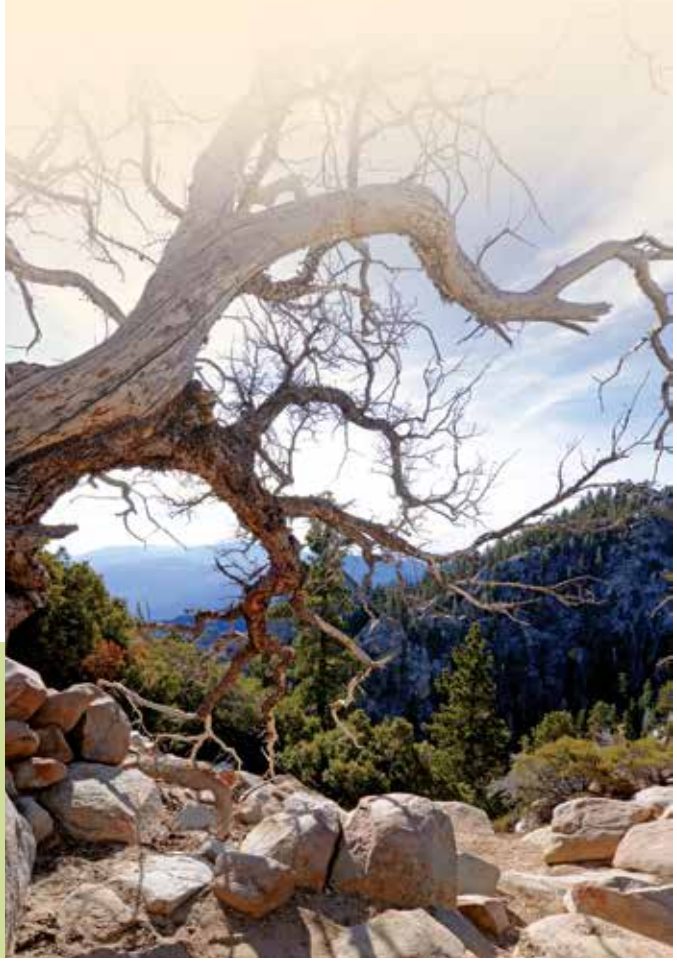
John Muir once remarked that the view from Mount San Jacinto was "the most sublime spectacle to be found anywhere on this earth."



When you enter Mount San Jacinto State Park, you come into the heart of the wilderness, high in the San Jacinto Mountains. This 14,000-acre park can be reached via Highway 243 from Idyllwild or by tram from Palm Springs. Granite peaks, sub-alpine forests, and mountain meadows offer the best opportunity to enjoy a primitive high-country experience south of the Sierra Nevada range.

San Jacinto Peak—a giant, often snow-capped crag marked by great upthrusts of weathered granite—rises 10,834 feet above sea level. It is the highest peak in the San Jacinto Range and in the California State Park System.

Several other peaks within the park exceed 10,000 feet in elevation. Much of the rest of the park, standing at more than 6,000 feet, is cool and comfortable in the summer. Average summer temperatures during the day are in the 70s with nights dropping into the 50s. During the winter the ground is often snow covered and temperatures can range from the 40s during the day to single digits at night.

From the Tramway Mountain Station, you can see the greens of Palm Springs golf courses, the agricultural areas in the Coachella Valley, and the windmill farm. The vistas from the park sweep into the desert hundreds of miles, extending southeast to the Salton Sea and beyond into the Imperial Valley.

The northeast face of the San Jacinto Range plunges down 9,000 feet in less than four miles—among the steepest and most spectacular escarpments in North America.

The Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, one of the world's largest and longest single-lift passenger tramways, carries passengers 2.5 miles from the Valley Station in Chino Canyon to the Mountain Station, on the edge of the Mount San Jacinto State Wilderness. After a lift of nearly 6,000 feet, visitors find themselves in a world quite different from the valley below. A range of hiking trails beckons those who are prepared to explore forests interspersed by small meadows.

For questions regarding the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, please call (888) 515-8726 or visit their website at pstramway.com. You can also email your question(s) to pstramway@pstramway.com.

PARK HISTORY

The Cahuilla, Native Californians, used the area for seasonal hunting. They traversed its wooded canyons and protected valleys, gathering food and other resources. Their trails still cross the mountain, and several bedrock mortars can be seen in or near the park. The mortars date back hundreds and perhaps thousands of years, giving evidence of long-term human habitation.

View of San Jacinto Range from San Gorgonio Pass

Palm Springs Aerial Tramway

European settlers at first used the high country much as the native people had, hunting the abundant deer. Later, loggers began to harvest the hillsides of pine while domestic sheep and cattle grazed the fragile mountain meadows.

In 1897 President Grover Cleveland created the San Jacinto Forest Reserve to help contain and control these practices. The Reserve became the San Jacinto Ranger District of San Bernardino National Forest in 1930.

When the California State Park System was established in 1927, a state park at San Jacinto became a priority. The first 12,695 acres for the park were deeded to the California State Park Commission in 1933 and were opened to the public in 1937.

The aerial tramway was authorized by California's Legislature in 1945 and completed in 1963.

Visitors to the park can now take a 15-minute tram ride and experience a series of biotic communities; they range from desert scrub at the Valley Station to a mixed conifer forest dotted with wildflowers at the Mountain Station. From Idyllwild, trails of varying difficulty travel through conifer forests, past lush meadows, and across rocky outcrops into San Jacinto's high country wilderness.

The park became part of the 280,071-acre Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument in October of 2000.

The park's Rustic Historic District had the honored distinction of being placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2013.

NATURAL HISTORY

Similar to the Sierra Nevada, the San Jacinto Mountains rest on a major fault block with a distinct westward tilt. The entire San Jacinto region—bounded on the west by the San Jacinto Fault and on the north and east by the San Andreas Fault—is seismically active and slowly rising in elevation.

In 2002, 255 acres of Mount San Jacinto State Wilderness were designated as the Hidden Divide Natural Preserve. This classification provides the highest level of protection possible to Hidden Divide's sensitive wildlife, plant species, and distinctive natural features.

Steller's jay

The park's varied landscapes shelter white-headed woodpeckers, Steller's jays, and mountain chickadees. Noisy Clark's nutcrackers and red crossbills feed on the seeds of the forest's pine species—Jeffrey, sugar, and lodgepole pines.

RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

A short walk from the tram station takes you into Long Valley, which has a ranger station, a picnic area, restrooms, a self-guided nature trail, and the Desert View Trail overlooking Coachella Valley.

Snow normally covers the wilderness from November through April. High winds and sub-freezing temperatures are common. For current weather and trail conditions, call (760) 327-0222.

Camping

Developed campsites are available in Mount San Jacinto State Park at Idyllwild and Stone Creek campgrounds. Reservations are recommended; visit **www.parks.ca.gov** or call (800) 444-7275 up to six months in advance. Summer weekends fill quickly. Sites accommodate motor homes or trailers up to 24 feet long. Winter camping demands

preparation and good equipment. In the San Bernardino National Forest, developed campsites may be reserved by calling United States Forest Service (USFS) at (877) 444-6777.

Hike-in Camping

A Wilderness Camping Permit is required. California State Parks and the USFS manage the two wilderness areas in the San Jacinto Mountains. Camping permits must be obtained from the agency that administers the area where you plan to camp. This permit serves as a hike-through pass within all state park and US Forest Service boundaries. For weekend camping in one of the four state wilderness campgrounds, obtaining a camping permit in advance is highly recommended. Mount San Jacinto State Wilderness permit applications are available at **www.parks.ca.gov/msjsp**. Allow at least two weeks before your visit for valid permits to be issued and returned to you. For USFS camping info and permits, visit **www.fs.usda.gov/sbnf**.

Within the state wilderness boundaries, camping is permitted only in designated campsites.

NO OPEN FIRES ARE ALLOWED. Only camping stoves with an on/off switch are permitted.

Day Hiking

The park's extensive trail system was designed to minimize the impact on scenic and wilderness values. Popular hikes start from either the town of Idyllwild or the tram's Mountain Station. The park's most popular wilderness hike, a 4.5 mile loop takes you to Round Valley where you can see an alpine meadow and a historic ranger station built in the 1930's. You can also hike from Long Valley to San Jacinto Peak, a strenuous round trip of about 12 miles with a 2,434-foot elevation gain.

All day hikers must have permits to enter the wilderness. Obtain day-use permits on the day of your trip by visiting one of the ranger stations shown on the map. These permits are honored by both agencies except during the summer, when day-use permits to enter the wilderness via Devil's Slide Trail can only be obtained from the USFS ranger station in Idyllwild.

Emergency shelter built by the Civilian Conservation Corps located below San Jacinto Peak

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

Stone Creek Campground in Idyllwild has accessible camping and a trail. Idyllwild Campground near headquarters has accessible camping and showers. Parking, restrooms, and picnic areas are all accessible. Mountain Station has an accessible elevator and viewpoint. The wilderness area terrain is extremely steep and rugged. People with mobility issues may want to access the backcountry from Stone Creek. Accessibility is continually improving; for updates, call the park at (951) 659-2607 or visit **http://access.parks.ca.gov**.

Photo courtesy of Sean Hueber

Preserve plants and prevent erosion by staying on trails.

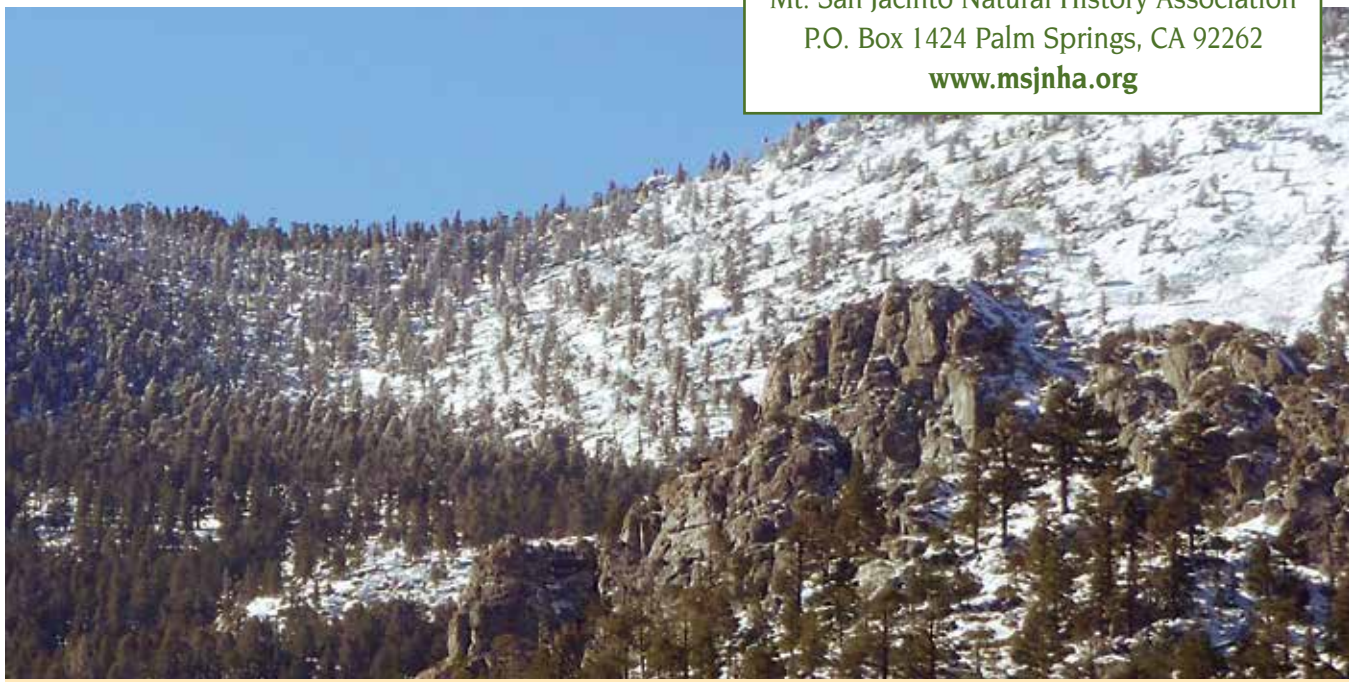
PLEASE REMEMBER

- **Caution**—All natural and cultural features are protected by law and may not be disturbed or removed.
- **Permits**—You must have a permit to enter the wilderness. If you are under the age of 18 you must be with a parent or guardian or have a signed consent to obtain the permit.
- **Litter**—Pack out all trash.
- **Sanitation**—In the state wilderness, use the pit toilets in the campgrounds. In USFS areas, bury human waste at least eight inches deep and at least 200 feet from the nearest drainage, trail, or camp.
- **Waste Water**—Wash dishes and dispose of waste water at least 100 feet from any stream, spring, or faucet.
- **Trails**—Please stay on trails. Help preserve plants and prevent erosion by not making or using shortcuts.
- **Horses**—Equestrians must pack in weed-free feed; grazing in the meadows is prohibited.
- **Smoking**—Smoking is permitted only in designated areas at the tram's Mountain Station. At Idyllwild and Stone Creek, smoking is permitted only within designated campsites.
- **Hunting**—The wilderness is a state game refuge; possession of firearms, bows and arrows, slingshots, or other weapons is prohibited.
- **Dogs**—Except for trained service animals, all dogs are prohibited in the wilderness areas.
- **Fires**—All fires are prohibited in the wilderness areas. Camping stoves are permitted.
- **Motor vehicles, bicycles, strollers, coolers, and any wheeled devices, except wheelchairs or walkers, are prohibited in the uneven terrain of the state and USFS wildernesses.**

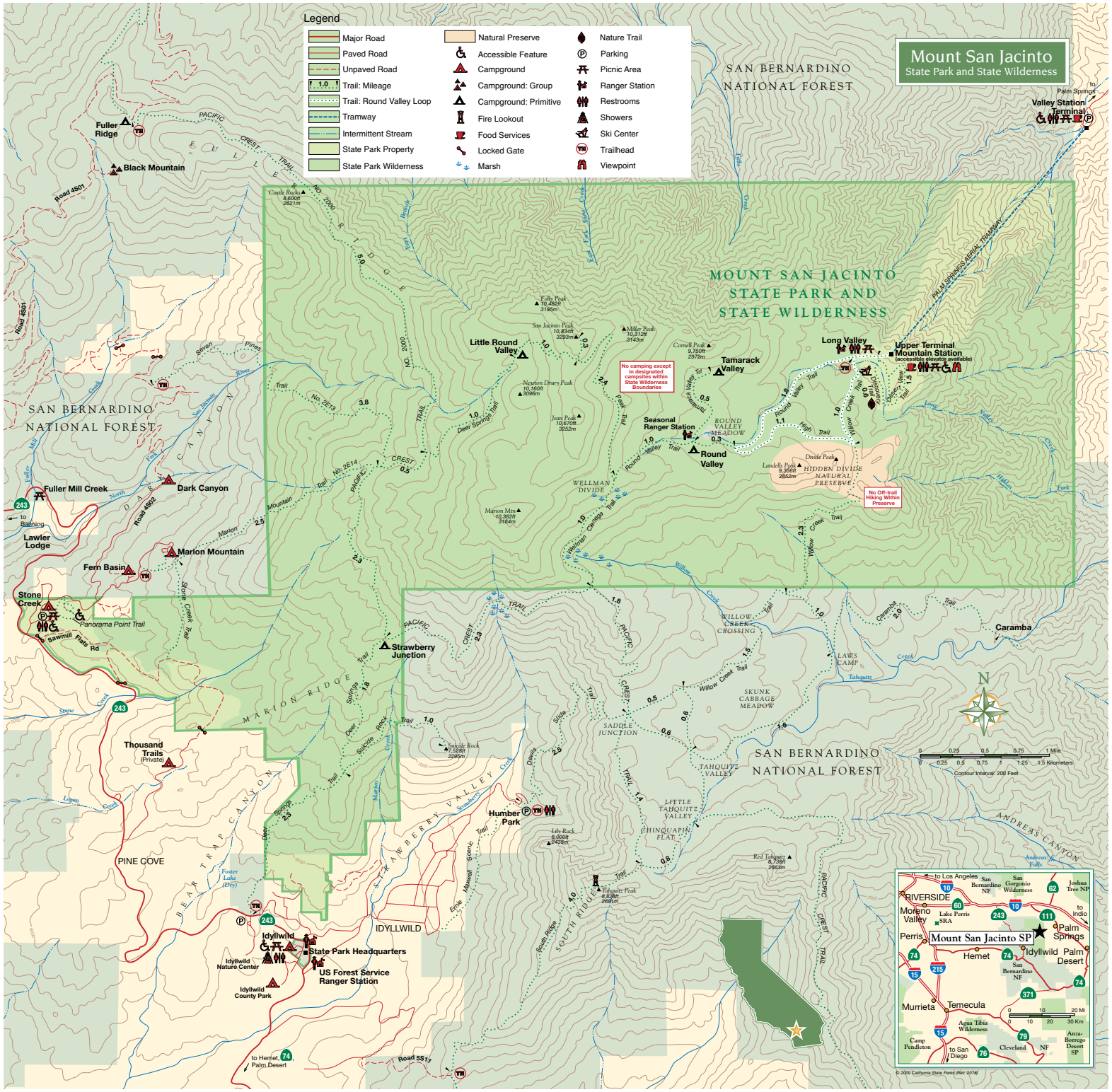
NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Anza-Borrego Desert State Park
  200 Palm Canyon Drive
  Borrego Springs 92004
  (760) 767-5311
- Lake Perris State Recreation Area
  17801 Lake Perris Drive
  Perris 92571
  (951) 940-5600

This park receives support in part through a nonprofit organization.
For more information contact:
Mt. San Jacinto Natural History Association
P.O. Box 1424 Palm Springs, CA 92262
www.msjnha.org



Weather can be unpredictable; bring warm clothing layers to prepare for sudden changes.


Mount San Jacinto
State Park and State Wilderness
Legend
Major Road
Paved Road
Unpaved Road
Trail: Mileage
Trail: Round Valley Loop
Tramway
Intermittent Stream
State Park Property
State Park Wilderness
Natural Preserve
Accessible Feature
Campground
Campground: Group
Campground: Primitive
Fire Lookout
Food Services
Locked Gate
Marsh
Nature Trail
Parking
Picnic Area
Ranger Station
Restrooms
Showers
Ski Center
Trailhead
Viewpoint
SAN BERNARDINO NATIONAL FOREST
MOUNT SAN JACINTO STATE PARK AND STATE WILDERNESS
Valley Station Terminal
to Palm Springs
Fuller Ridge
Black Mountain
Little Round Valley
Tamarack Valley
Long Valley
Upper Terminal
Mountain Station
(accessible elevator available)
PALM SPRINGS AERIAL TRAMWAY
No camping except in designated campsites within State Wilderness Boundaries
Seasonal Ranger Station
Round Valley
ROUND VALLEY MEADOW
HIDDEN DIVIDE NATURAL PRESERVE
No Off-trail Hiking Within Preserve
WELLMAN DIVIDE
Fuller Mill Creek
Dark Canyon
Lawler Lodge
Marion Mountain
Fern Basin
Stone Creek
Panorama Point Trail
Sawmill Flats Rd
Strawberry Junction
Caramba
WILLOW CREEK CROSSING
LAWS CAMP
SKUNK CABBAGE MEADOW
SADDLE JUNCTION
TAHQUITZ VALLEY
LITTLE TAHQUITZ VALLEY
CHINQUAPIN FLAT
Thousand Trails
(Private)
PINE COVE
Humber Park
IDYLLWILD
Idyllwild
State Park Headquarters
Idyllwild Nature Center
US Forest Service Ranger Station
Idyllwild County Park
to Hemet, Palm Desert
Contour Interval: 200 Feet
Mount San Jacinto SP
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