

This southernmost part of the Golden State, with its warm beaches, sculpted bluffs and historic adobe buildings, has been a mecca for individuals seeking a better life. Today, more than ever, it is the destination of millions who pursue the modern equivalent of the "California Dream."



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 does not discriminate against individuals with disabilities. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at (619) 688-3260. To receive this publication in an alternate format, contact:

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Discover the many states of California.™

San Diego Coast State Parks

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Cover photo courtesy of Susan Myrland.

San Diego Coast State Parks



The San Diego Coast is world famous for its mild year-round climate. This fifty-mile stretch of coastline, from the U.S. Marine Corps base at Camp Pendleton to the Mexican border, contains some of California's most interesting and rare examples of natural and cultural heritage.

San Diego's early history comes alive at Old Town San Diego State Historic Park, located in the heart of the city, and at San Pasqual Battlefield State Historic Park, near San Diego's famed Wild Animal Park in the north county.

Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, the home of rare and endangered Torrey pines, lies thirty miles north of the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve and the international border. The Research Reserve provides protection for a designated "wetland of national importance" and offers an educational facility for students and visitors.

San Diego Coast state parks provide visitors with three areas for camping and many day-use beaches. South Carlsbad and San Elijo State Beaches in the north county have full-service campgrounds with all the amenities except hookups, and Silver Strand State Beach in the south county

provides beach-level camping between the communities of Coronado and Imperial Beach. Day-use beach access is available from Carlsbad State Beach to Border Field State Park.

Early California history, recreational opportunities and natural wonders await you in San Diego Coast state parks.

OLD TOWN SAN DIEGO STATE HISTORIC PARK

Explore the rich heritage of California by touring the unique museum exhibits and shops in the historic adobe buildings of Old Town San Diego. Today's Old Town bustles

with activity while preserving the essence of one of California's earliest settlements.

On May 15, 1769, an overland party

of Spanish soldiers, priests and explorers led by Captain Gaspar de Portolá and Franciscan Father Junípero Serra, arrived in what is today San Diego. They built a chapel dedicated to Saint Diego and a fort on what is now Presidio Hill just to the east of present-day Old Town. As time passed, the town built up around a typical Spanish plaza, and the first San Diego community was born. Since 1769 it has known the rule of Spain, Mexico and the United States.

Today the historic park reflects the cultural elements of its exciting and romantic past. Guided tours are available. For more information, call (619) 220-5422.



Bandini House in Old Town San Diego



Painting of early San Diego by Lt. William H. Emory, 1846



Father Junípero Serra

SAN PASQUAL BATTLEFIELD STATE HISTORIC PARK

An award-winning visitor center interprets the Mexican War, as well as the history of the San Pasqual Indians and the development of San Pasqual Valley.

On a cold, wet December 6, 1846, in the valley known as San Pasqual, United States General Stephen Watts Kearny and his soldiers met 80 armed Mexican Californios under the leadership of Andrés Pico in a battle for the sovereignty of California. The Battle of San Pasqual was the bloodiest battle fought in California during the Mexican War. For more park information, call (760) 737-2201.



Whimbrel

A seawall promenade stretches from Pine Street to Tamarack Avenue and offers views of Agua Hedionda Lagoon. From the walkway, visitors may watch marbled godwits and whimbrels troll the beach and gulls, cormorants and pelicans fly over the waves. Marine mammals such as dolphins, sea lions and harbor seals splash offshore.

Carlsbad State Beach is accessed via Tamarack Avenue, off Interstate 5. For more information, call (760) 438-3143.

SOUTH CARLSBAD STATE BEACH

This narrow beach has historically been described as “cobble beach.” Sand periodically buries the natural seawall of cobblestones for long periods of time. But changing weather and water currents, along with the nearby dredging of Agua Hedionda Lagoon, affect the beach composition.

The park has 220 campsites and two day-use areas. Ponto Day-Use Area, south of the campground, has restroom



Cardiff State Beach

facilities and requires a parking fee. Visitors enjoy swimming, board and body surfing, and scuba diving.

South Carlsbad State Beach is reached by exiting Interstate 5 at Palomar Airport Road in the City of Carlsbad

and heading south along the Pacific Coast Highway (Carlsbad Blvd). For more information, call (760) 438-3143.

SAN ELIJO AND CARDIFF STATE BEACHES

Although San Elijo and Cardiff are separate state park units, they adjoin and can be enjoyed as one.

San Elijo State Beach, with two miles of coastline, is mainly a campground, but



San Elijo State Beach

CARLSBAD STATE BEACH

Carlsbad State Beach is one of San Diego's most popular beaches. The Tamarack Avenue area is a favorite surf spot. The reef provides gentle waves, perfect for long and short board surfing. Certain areas are set aside for swimming only.



includes a small day-use lot. Reservations are necessary for the 171 campsites, which fill quickly for holidays and the summer season.

Cardiff State Beach is located south of San Elijo Creek. Developed day-use facilities with outdoor showers and modern restrooms are available. Day-use fees are collected at each beach.

“Pipes,” “Turtles,” “Cardiff Reef,” “Georges,” and “Seaside” are major surfing attractions in these state parks. Swimming and scuba diving are also popular activities. Inshore holes and strong rip currents can be dangerous. Contact a lifeguard for suggestions about safe swimming areas.

Located in the city of Encinitas, the parks are reachable from Interstate 5 by exiting to the west on Birmingham or Manchester and following the signs to entrances from the Pacific Coast Highway. For more information, call (760) 753-5091.

TORREY PINES STATE NATURAL RESERVE AND STATE BEACH

Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve is a jewel of the California State Park System. Named for the native pines growing on the bluffs, this park has natural splendor that is truly memorable. Seven miles of hiking trails offer



Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve

spectacular views of America’s rarest pine tree, which grows along these dramatic ocean cliffs.

Torrey Pines State Beach, along the Pacific Coast Highway, is framed by impressive bluffs to the north and south and the Los Peñasquitos Marsh Natural Preserve, which runs through this eye-catching wonder. Stretching for five miles, the beach provides a great

venue for walking, running, photography, or just enjoying the ocean and shore.

Parking and restrooms are provided at the beach and trailhead. A visitor center



presents the detailed story of the Torrey pines. Beautiful Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve and State Beach are located between the cities of Del Mar and San Diego. From Interstate 5, exit west on Carmel Valley Road, go one mile, then go 3/4 mile south on the Pacific Coast Highway. For more information, call (858) 755-2063, or visit www.parks.ca.gov/torreypines.



Torrey pine

SILVER STRAND STATE BEACH

Silver Strand State Beach lies along a seven-mile isthmus to Coronado Island in San Diego Bay. For day-use visitors, ample parking along the ocean front allows easy access to both the ocean and bay front beaches.

There are dressing rooms, showers and restroom facilities close by, and picnic tables are available for small and large groups. A concession stand is open during the summer season, providing snacks, cold drinks and surf rental equipment.

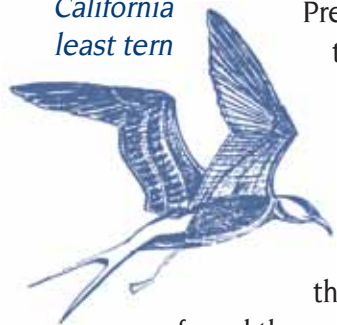
If you have a self-contained camping vehicle, you can stay the evening and enjoy the sunset, relax with friends around a campfire, and catch the morning sunrise over the mountains. Beachside



Silver Strand State Beach

RV campsites may be reserved by calling (800) 444-7275 or visiting www.parks.ca.gov.

California least tern



Silver Strand Natural Preserve, located on the south side of the entrance to Silver Strand State Beach, contains a unique coastal strand plant community

that was once found throughout the southern California coast and is now rare. Nesting sites for the California least tern and Western snowy plover are also found here. Call (619) 435-5184 for information.



Endangered Western snowy plover

BORDER FIELD STATE PARK

Located within the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve, Border Field State Park is in the very southwestern corner of the United States, 15 miles south of San Diego.

Visitors enjoy fishing, beach-walking, hiking, horseback riding and birdwatching. Swimming and wading are not recommended due to

hazardous conditions such as inshore holes, rip currents, and the lack of lifeguard service. The park provides restrooms, picnic areas, horse corrals and scenic views across the beach and estuary. For more information, call (619) 575-3613.

TIJUANA RIVER NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE

The Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve is one of only 24 wetlands in the United States that has been designated by the International Ramsar Committee as a “wetland of international importance.” Estuaries provide food and nesting areas for many creatures, especially shorebirds. At least 370 bird species have been seen here.

All of the plants and animals in this park are protected—some are threatened or endangered. With your help, the estuary will be preserved forever.

A visitor center at 301 Caspian Way, Imperial Beach, has exhibits and activities to explain the resources of the estuary. For more information, call (619) 575-3613 or visit www.parks.ca.gov/tijuanaestuary.

PLEASE REMEMBER

- Dogs are not allowed on most beaches because they often disturb wildlife, especially birds. Where dogs are allowed, they must be kept on a six-foot leash at all times.

- California State Parks along the San Diego Coast are located in and near urban areas. Lock your car and keep valuables with you. Report all crimes and emergencies to rangers, lifeguards or 911.
- Please do not feed wildlife. Human food may be harmful and may encourage aggressive behavior. Store food securely in campground lockers or vehicles.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES 

Accessibility is continually improving. For updates, call the parks or visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.



Tijuana Estuary



Border Field State Park

San Diego Coast State Parks



The staff and volunteers of the San Diego Coast state parks are dedicated to providing you with a quality park experience—safe recreation, an understanding of the rich cultural heritage of California, and an appreciation of our natural wonders. Please contact a staff member or volunteer with your questions or comments.

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