

PRESS RELEASE

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Divisions of Boating and Waterways, Historic Preservation and Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation

For Immediate Release

May 23, 2019

Contact:

[Newsroom](#) | (916) 654-7538

Recreate Safely and Responsibly this Memorial Day Weekend

California State Parks Offers Safety Tips

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Memorial Day weekend kicks off California’s busiest season for outdoor recreation. California State Parks encourages outdoor enthusiasts to recreate safely and responsibly this summer season. It is important for visitors to plan ahead and learn about the parks that they are visiting in order to minimize any accidents. Whether you plan on biking, hiking, surfing, horseback riding, diving, swimming, recreating on a boat or off-highway vehicle (OHV), or simply enjoying time with friends and family in the outdoors, learning about the park before your visit is crucial. This is especially important this year, due to the large amounts of snow and rain California has received. Rivers are currently running dangerously cold and fast—even experienced swimmers are advised not to go into rivers.

Below are some additional outdoor tips for the 2019 summer season:

General Tips

- **Rules/Laws:** Take the time to go to the webpage of the park you plan to visit and learn about the rules, such as parking, closed areas and whether dogs are allowed. It is also important to learn the laws for recreating in boats and/or off-highway vehicles.
- **Cell Phones:** Do not rely on your phones. Coverage can be spotty or nonexistent in remote parks.
- **Weather:** Check the weather and bring appropriate clothing to fit the season.
- **Itinerary:** No matter what type of recreational activity you will be participating in, leave an itinerary of your trip with a friend or family member with the name and age of all participants, travel destination and expected return date. This helps law enforcement personnel be better aware of your location in the event of a rescue.
- **Keep It Clean:** Pack it in and pack it out.
- **Wildlife:** View wildlife from a distance. Never feed or touch animals and other wildlife.
- **Safety:**
 - Carry a first-aid kit.
 - Avoid alcohol. It is against the law to operate a boat or off-highway vehicle with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08 percent or more.
 - As with any outdoor outing, be observant and aware of your surroundings. Report any suspicious activity to park staff or call 911 immediately.

Water Recreation

- **Protect Your Loved Ones:** Know your limits. Swimming in a lake, ocean or river is different than swimming in a pool. If someone is in distress, seek help from a lifeguard or call 911 if a lifeguard is not available.
- **Wear a properly fitted life jacket:** Always check the label for correct use and size and approval from the U.S. Coast Guard. Wearing a life jacket can increase survival time and provide some thermal protection against the onset of cold-water shock. It can also keep you afloat until someone can rescue you.
- **Swift/Cold Rivers:** Due to the large amounts of snow and rain received this year, rivers are currently running dangerously cold and fast. Do not overestimate your swimming abilities as cold water and swift currents can exhaust a person in seconds. Even the strongest swimmers can be stunned by cold water and become incapacitated. For now, avoid swimming and recreating in rivers.
- **Swimming:** Never swim alone and be cautious at unguarded beaches, lakes and rivers. Whenever possible, swim at a lifeguard-protected beach.
- **Ocean Rip Currents:** Stay calm and do not fight the current. Swim or float parallel to the shore until you are out of the current, then swim toward the shore.
- **Actively supervise children at all times:** Appoint a designated “water watcher,” taking turns with other adults. Do not assume that someone is watching the children.

Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation

- **Equipment:** Use proper equipment such as protective clothing, goggles, a proper helmet, gloves and spark arrestor.
- **Natural Resources:** Tread lightly and stay on designated trails.
- **Drive with Courtesy:** Be prepared to yield any time there is doubt and you can safely do so.
- **Drive Carefully:** Approach curves and hill crests with caution. Assume there are vehicles ahead and slow your driving accordingly. Allow extra room and stopping distance when approaching other vehicles.

Camping & Hiking

- **Map Guides:** Get a map of the area you will be camping or hiking.
- **Use the Buddy System:** Hike with a friend or family member.
- **Stay Hydrated:** Make sure you have plenty of water and snacks with you.
- **Natural Resources:** Stay on designated trails. You are not only protecting natural resources; you are also ensuring that you do not get lost.
- **Snakes:** Be careful where you step. If you see a snake, maintain a distance of 6 feet. Most bites occur when people get too close or try to touch snakes.

Drivers and Cyclists

- **Share the Road:** Be prepared for joggers, wildlife, rocks, pedestrians, equestrians, rocks, etc.
- **Speed:** Observe posted speed limits.
- **Stay in your lane:** Do not pass on double-yellow lines, pass only when you have a clear view of oncoming traffic and do not cut corners.

- **Gear:** Wear a helmet and protective clothing. Wearing headphones that cover both ears is illegal—if headphones are needed, only cover one ear.

Equestrian Riders

- **Distance:** Make sure to leave enough distance between horses. Make sure you can see the hooves of the horse in front of you.
- **Grooming:** Groom and condition your horse before leaving the barn.
- **Gear:** Wear a helmet and protective clothing.

With more than 340 miles of coastline, 970 miles of lake and river frontage, 15,000 campsites, and 4,500 miles of trails, California State Parks contains the largest and most diverse recreational, natural, and cultural heritage holdings of any state agency in the nation. More than 67 million people annually visit California’s state park system. Invent your adventure online at www.parks.ca.gov.



###

Subscribe to California State Parks News online at www.parks.ca.gov/news or email us at newsroom@parks.ca.gov.

California State Parks provides 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. Learn more at www.parks.ca.gov.

[Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Blog](#) | [Periscope](#) | [Flickr](#)