

CUYAMACA RANCHO STATE PARK

Civilian Conservation Corps Heritage Adventure

Ranger Station and Fire station

Look for these two buildings side-by-side to the west of the road, just south of the Paso Picacho campground sign.

The ranger station was built as the “Warden’s Residence.” (In the 1930s, a park’s supervising ranger was called the State Park Warden.) The fire station is . . . still a fire station! Note the granite monument acknowledging the work of the Cs in front of these two buildings.

Paso Picacho Campground

The campsites are surrounded by and terraced with rockwork. The highlight of the CCC work in the campground is the Nature Den. It was originally built as the Winter Shelter. At that time, park activities included skiing, tobogganing, and ice skating.

Green Valley Campground

Between October 1933 and April 1935, Cuyamaca Rancho had two CCC camps: the main camp and a separate camp at Green Valley. The Green Valley boys developed the Green Valley campground and picnic area, another ranger residence, and the trail to Green Valley Falls. And, of course, they fought fires.

The CCC-built residence is to your left right after you turn off the highway onto the road to the Green Valley campground. Continuing toward the picnic area and campground, you will cross the Sweetwater River on a concrete ford with rockwork on the sides. Yes, this was also built by the CCC.

Touring through the picnic and campgrounds, you will see the characteristic CCC stone campstoves at many sites. You will also see more fire damage. The Cedar Fire destroyed CCC-built bathrooms and tables in both the picnic and camping areas. State Parks replaced the bathrooms with modern comfort stations that blend respectfully with the CCC park rustic style.

Headquarters Area: CCC Camp Cuyamaca site.

There are no known remaining CCC features in the headquarters area. It was, however, the location of the main CCC camp at Cuyamaca Rancho. The camp was located where the county environmental education camp is now. The stone bridge and stone house (known as the Dyar House) you see as you enter the area look like CCC stonework, but were built long before the CCC.

State Parks acquired the land for the park from the Dyar family in 1933. (The Dyar House served as the park museum and headquarters until it burnt in the Cedar Fire. State Parks has stabilized what remains of the building, and the California State Parks Foundation is now raising funds to qualify for a grant for its reconstruction.)

The new Cuyamaca Rancho State Park had one of the first CCC camps in California. It opened in May, 1933. The camp included a high school run by the Julian school district. All Camp Cuyamaca enrollees who were not high school graduates were required to attend school in the evenings.

Want to Go Farther?

Companies at Cuyamaca spent the winter months in lower elevations, including Anza Borrego Desert State Park. At Anza Borrego they developed the upper Palm Canyon Campground with their trademark stonework camp stoves, tables and benches. They also built several unusual campground shade ramadas complete with fireplaces, which still stand. They constructed a ranger residence, too, and probably were the original builders of the Palm Canyon Nature Trail, which has a distinctive set of stone steps on one section. The stone restrooms they built in the campground have no roofs by design.



On the Trail of the CCC

Hike Up Stonewall Peak

Start: Stonewall Peak trailhead, across highway from Paso Picacho.

Length: approximately 2 miles (one-way)

Difficulty: Moderate (moderate uphill at start, easy grade for most of distance, stone steps on final ascent)

This CCC-built trail features rockwork retaining walls on many of the switchbacks. At the top is a set of steps carved into the rock, leading to a view platform also built by the Cs. From the top you will get a panoramic view of Cuyamaca Rancho and far beyond, including the widespread evidence of the Cedar Fire.

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