

More Biking in California State Parks Discovering the Natural Wonders of the State on Two Wheels

California State Parks provide a variety of opportunities for bicyclists to experience the natural wonders of the state. More State Park trails are becoming available each year, expanding chances to discover California State Parks on two wheels.

Where mountain biking is allowed, there are usually signs posted to advise who yields to whom - mountain bikes to horses to hikers. "Yield" means "slow down, be prepared to stop, establish communication, and pass safely." In some areas, there are volunteer mountain bike patrols to help enforce the rules. Before starting the ride, visitors are encouraged to find out from park staff or other riders the difficulty of the ride, if there is water available, and types and numbers of other trail users they are likely to encounter. It's also a good idea to get a copy of the trail map. Visitors should remember that, in most cases, they will be sharing the trail with other users and they should be sensitive to others' needs on the trails.

Visitors are advised that it's always a good idea to call ahead because conditions can change. For example, some parks are closed to riding for 24 - 48 hours after a heavy rainfall.

The International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA, www.IMBA.com) encourages the following accepted "Rules of the Trail" etiquette tips:

1. Ride on open trails only.
2. Leave no trace.
3. Always yield trail.
4. Control your bicycle.
5. Never scare animals.
6. Plan ahead.

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State Park suggestions include:

1. Know and follow individual public park rules and regulations.
2. Stay on designated trails.
3. Be alert and courteous.

4. Avoid muddy trails.
5. Safe interaction leads to all recreational users having continuous access to trails.
6. Respect park neighbors and the rights and privacy of private property owners.
7. Pack out your litter.
8. Approach each bend or blind spot as if someone were coming.
9. Safety first - control your speed.
10. Pass with caution at "walking" speed.
11. Downhill traffic yields to uphill traffic.
12. When riding, always wear a helmet.

Here are some ideas on where to go:

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Cuyamaca Rancho State Park (SAN DIEGO COUNTY) has multi-use trails. The park is six miles north of I-8 on Highway 79 northeast of San Diego. For more information, call the park at (760) 765-0755 (press #10) or (760) 767-4037.

Gaviota State Park (SANTA BARBARA COUNTY) boasts a diverse array of single track and fire road trails. Riders can choose from an easy rolling out and back through pristine oak woodlands to challenging technical trails with steep climbs. The park has trails for all levels of biking experience. Mountain bikers, hikers and equestrians helped work on the park's canyon-side trails during Santa Barbara Trail Days. The park is 33 miles west of Santa Barbara on Highway 101. For more information, call the park at (805) 968-1033 or (805) 968-1711.

Malibu Creek State Park (LOS ANGELES COUNTY) offers some of the most scenic mountain biking in the greater Los Angeles area. Riders will enjoy the diversity of plants and animals they can see while riding in the park. Views of stunning geologic formations and dense lush mountainsides contrasted with the rolling oak woodlands give the park its variety. From advanced hill climbs, such as up Bulldog Road to Castro Peak to a moderate ride from the day-use parking

lot from High Road to Crags Road to see the visitor center, Century lake and to the filming site of "M*A*S*H", riders can pick the difficulty they wish. Mountain bikes are allowed only on the fire roads at Malibu Creek State Park. Please yield to hikers and equestrians on all roads. The park is located four miles south of Highway 101 on Las Virgenes/Malibu Canyon Road in Calabasas. For more information, call the park at (818) 880-0350.

Point Mugu State Park (VENTURA COUNTY) has miles of fireroad and multi-use trail featuring ocean views. The park offers a diverse and scenic biking experience for the beginning as well as the advanced rider. Some of the more advanced trails, such as the Overlook Fire Road, offer incredible mountain views and steep descents that are both fun and challenging. Riders are advised to keep speeds to 15 mph at all times, since there may be pedestrians, equestrians and other bikers nearby.

The Sycamore Canyon Fire Road offers a relatively flat riding experience for riders of all skill levels. This trail offers seasonal stream crossings, views of wildlife (such as California Valley quails and deer) and wildflowers in season. There is one steep hill on this trail that can be enjoyed or bypassed. Some riders like to park one car in the Rancho Sierra Vista National Park parking lot and another on the coast at Sycamore Canyon so they only have to ride down on the asphalt hill. Others ride from the coastal parking lot at Sycamore Canyon up to the bottom of the hill and then turn around.

Trails open to biking include Gudalasca Trail, Sage Trail, and Wood Canyon Vista Trail. The area is the home of the first joint volunteer bike patrol, the Mountain Bike Unit, created by CORBA (Concerned Off-Road Bicyclists Association). They are available for assistance for emergency situations as well as discuss trails to recommend.

To access the park from the Pacific Coast Highway, park in the Sycamore Canyon day-use parking lot. Day-use fees are \$3 per vehicle for parking. To access the park from Highway 101 in Newbury Park, take the Wendy Drive exit

and follow the signs to the National and State Park entrance at Rancho Sierra Vista. There is no fee to park and direct access is provided to the mountain bike riding heart of the park's backcountry. Visitors are advised to bring water and snacks, since no services are provided. Riders are advised to respect all trail signage that indicate some trails are closed due to sensitive plant and animal habitat. For more information, call the park at (818) 880-0350.

Topanga State Park and Will Rogers State Historic Park (LOS ANGELES COUNTY) provides mountain biking that gives visitors a look at different kinds of ecosystems, including oak woodlands, chaparral, grasslands and riparian zones with ponds and streams. Riders can look for lizards, birds and animal tracks, including coyote and bobcat and can break for shade under the park's old oak trees. These parks, so close to a major urban area, provide stunning views of the parks' wilderness.

With many riding possibilities to choose from, riders can start at different areas in Pacific Palisades or Santa Monica to access fire roads for unique riding experiences. Many visitors enjoy the access at Trippet Ranch in Topanga State Park, which provides access to the Eagle Springs Fire Road. It's advised to call the Ranger Station ahead of time to check on conditions and to find appropriate riding trails for the appropriate level of your riding experience. Riders are reminded to ride only on fire roads and to yield to hikers and equestrians and to keep speed to 15 mph.

Topanga State Park can be reached from Highway 101 in Woodland Hills, south on Topanga Canyon Road, seven miles to Entrada Road, and west into the park. The park phone number is (310) 454-8212 or (310) 455-2465. Will Rogers State Historic Park is located at 14253 Sunset Boulevard in Pacific Palisades. The park phone number is (310) 454-8212 or (818) 880-0350.

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA

Henry W. Coe State Park (SANTA CLARA/STANISLAUS COUNTIES) provides bicyclists with a backcountry adventure less than an hour from downtown San Jose. The park offers both spacious expanses of oak savannah and the rugged beauty of mixed evergreen forest; the spaciousness and the harsh beauty that is typical of California grasslands. Over a hundred miles of dirt roads and many additional miles of single-track trails are open to mountain bikers. Because of steep terrain in the park, the trails are advised for experienced riders. (The park is an unofficial training site for pro racers.) Visitors can ask for a trail map when they arrive at the park.

An added bonus is the park's many old farm lakes that dot the landscape, filled with bass and bluegill. (Fishing laws apply, so visitors who want to fish are advised to have a fishing license.)

Autumn and spring are considered the best times for bicycling in the area. Wildlife viewing, changing colors, and cooler temperatures make fall riding enjoyable, and an array of colorful wildflowers fringe the trails each spring. The park can be extremely hot during summer. In winter, the trails can be wet and muddy and many trails may be closed during this time of year.

The Orestimba Wilderness is closed to mountain bikes, but the road from Paradise Flat to the western boundary of the wilderness near Upper San Antonio Valley is not in the wilderness area and is open to bikes. If riders use that corridor, they are advised to stay on the road. Even walking your bike in the Orestimba Wilderness area is not allowed. Riders can also enjoy the Cross Canyon, Middle Ridge and China Hole trails. As in all parks, riders are advised to follow the rules of trail etiquette. The park is located 14 miles east of Morgan Hill on East Dunne Avenue. For more information, call the park at (408) 779-2728.

Pacheco State Park (MERCED COUNTY) is perched atop Pacheco Pass and offers mountain bikers striking views of the San Luis Reservoir to the east and the Santa Clara Valley to the west. The park has approximately 27 miles of

single and two-track trails open year-round for mountain biking, hiking and horseback riding. The trails are moderately strenuous. All cyclists are advised that they must stay on designated trails and not head cross-country. Spring and fall are considered the best time for bicycling in the area due to better weather conditions. Dogs are not allowed on the trails. Riders are reminded to always follow trail etiquette in order to keep trails open for all users. Cattle grazing is ongoing from November through May and there will be specific gates that must be used during this time period. Visitors are advised to bring their own drinking water since potable water is not available in the park. For more information, call (209) 826-6283 or (209) 826-1197.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Annadel State Park (SONOMA COUNTY) features popular trails that traverse through remarkable oak woodlands, grasslands and forested sites. Hikers, runners, cyclists and equestrians worked together to develop a plan for road-to-trail conversion in the park, resulting in more miles of trail, but less dirt open to the elements. The area's old skid roads were fully restored; allowing these severely damaged areas to recover. Please remember that this is a very fragile area and ride on open, marked trails only. Some trails will be closed in the winter. The park is on Channel Drive East off Montgomery Drive in Santa Rosa. For more information, call the park at (707) 539-3911 or (707) 938-1519.

Auburn State Recreation Area (PLACER and EL DORADO COUNTIES) has multi-use trails. One of the most popular is the Foresthill Loop Trail, with 11 miles of rolling single track where it's not uncommon to see deer, rattlesnakes, bear, bobcats and wild turkeys. This is a shared use area with equestrians, hikers, bikers and hunters. (This is one of the view places in the State Park

System where visitors can hunt.) The park is located one mile south of Auburn on Highway 49. For more information, call the park at (530) 885-4527.

Big Basin Redwoods State Park (SANTA CRUZ/SAN MATEO COUNTIES) features 13 miles of serene fire road through redwood forests. There's the option of tying this into a loop with other park fire roads. The park is located 23 miles north of Santa Cruz via Highways 9 and 236. For more information, call the park at (831) 338-8860 or (831) 429-2850.

China Camp State Park (MARIN COUNTY) has a popular 10-mile loop. The park is four miles east of San Rafael on North San Pedro Road. For more information, call the park at (415) 456-0766 or (415) 893-1580.

Forest of Nisene Marks State Park (SANTA CRUZ COUNTY) is a popular spot for bikers, who are allowed on the main access road. The park has a long boarder with the Soquel Demonstration Forest, run by the California Division of Forestry, which provides a trail for bikes.

The park is located four miles north of Aptos on Aptos Creek Road. For more information, call the park at (831) 429-2850 or (831) 763-7062.

Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park (SANTA CRUZ COUNTY) has a ride on Pipeline Road to Ridge Road to the Rincon fire road. The route starts along the river, then climbs steeply to a view of the mountains, river canyon, Santa Cruz, and the coast. Riders are advised this can be a difficult route. The park is five miles north of Santa Cruz on Highway 9. For more information, call the park at (831) 335-4598.

Lake Oroville State Recreation Area (BUTTE COUNTY) has about 30 miles of multi-use trails. Visitors are advised that the best time for cycling is in the winter and spring when the surrounding hills are green and lush. The park is

located seven miles east of Oroville via Highway 162. For more information, call the park at (530) 538-2219 or (530) 538-2200.

Wilder Ranch State Park (SANTA CRUZ COUNTY) is another popular spot for bicyclists. The park has over 33 miles of bike trails. The park offers miles of interconnected multi-use trails that start at the coastal terrace and proceed up the mountain from the ocean where visitors can experience redwood forests, open grasslands and spectacular views of the coastline. An energetic and skilled volunteer staff had adopted the park. They know the trails well and they can be contacted at trailworkers.com

The park is two miles north of the Santa Cruz city limits, off Highway One. For more information, call the park at (831) 423-9703 or (831) 429-2850.



This is the sign cyclists will find in State Parks' multi-purpose trails.

For more information about California State Parks, go online to

www.parks.ca.gov

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