

California State Parks in Ventura/Santa Barbara Area Offer Visitors Variety

Visitors to California State Parks in the Ventura/Santa Barbara area can find a variety of experiences - from camping next to the beach to going back in time to experience life in a California mission.

First, here's what visitors can find:

San Buenaventura State Beach, located in the city of Ventura with the entrance on San Pedro Street off Highway 101, is popular for swimming, surfing and picnicking. The beach has two miles of sandy beach, sand dunes, picnic sites, and ample parking with easy freeway access. The Promenade, a long walking and biking trail along the coastline, connects the park to other nearby beaches. The park is the site of many festivals and special events, such as triathlons and volleyball tournaments. A 1,700-foot pier in the park has a snack bar, restaurant and bait shop. For more information, call (805) 648-4127.

Emma Wood State Beach is two miles west of Ventura. The North Beach Campground is reached via Highway 101, and the Group Camp entrance is at the west end of Main Street in Ventura. The park was named after one of Ventura's 19th century settlers. Moderate ocean temperatures at the beach make the area popular for swimming and surfing. Fishing enthusiasts can catch perch, bass, cabezon and corbina. A freshwater marsh at the southwest end of the beach attracts raccoons, songbirds and red-tailed hawks. The beach also features the ruins of a World War II coastal artillery site. There is a grassy area in the park for groups. The beach offers a view of Anacapa Island - and occasional dolphins. For more information, call (805) 648-4807 or (805) 899-1400.

Carpinteria State Beach, twelve miles south of Santa Barbara, offers a mile of beach for swimming, surf fishing, tidepool exploring and camping. When Spanish soldiers arrived at the site and saw Chumash craftsmen building large seagoing canoes, the explorers called the area " La Carpinteria," the carpentry shop. Naturally occurring surface tar at the site was used to waterproof the boats. Seals and sea lions can be seen in the area December through May, as well as an occasional gray whale. Tidepools contain sea stars, sea anemones, crabs, snails, octopi and sea urchins. For more information, call (805) 684-2811 or (805) 899-1400.

El Presidio de Santa Barbara State Historic Park, at the intersection of Santa Barbara and East Canon Perdido Streets in downtown Santa Barbara, was the last in a chain of four military fortresses built by the Spanish along the coast of Alta California, at that time a wilderness frontier.

The Santa Barbara outpost was built in 1782, and it served as the Spanish military and government headquarters for the lands between Los Angeles and San Luis Obispo until 1846. The buildings of the Presidio formed a quadrangle around a central parade ground. The buildings themselves were surrounded by an outer defense wall with two cannon bastions.

Two original buildings have been restored and five other reconstructed. The lieutenant's quarters, which are open to tours and special groups, are decorated with reproduction furniture and accessories. One of the rooms in the living quarters features a group of floor tiles retrieved from an on-site archeological dig.

The park is open to the public daily from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information, call (805) 965-0093.

El Capitán State Beach, 17 miles northwest of Santa Barbara on Highway 101, offers visitors a sandy beach, rocky tidepools, and stands of sycamore and oaks along El Capitán Creek. It's a popular place for swimming, fishing, surfing, picnicking and camping. A stairway provides access from the

bluffs to the beach area. A bike trail connects the park with Refugio State Beach, 2.5 miles away. Since the beach is 17 miles from the city, there's a sense of getting away from it all. For more information, call (805) 968-1033

Refugio State Beach, 23 miles northwest of Santa Barbara on Highway 101, has excellent coastal fishing as well as trails and picnic sites. Palm trees planted near Refugio Creek give a distinctive look to the beach and camping area. A bike trail along the beach bluff connects the beach with El Capitán State Beach. The campground is popular since it is right against the beach. For more information, call (805) 968-1033.

Gaviota State Park, 33 miles west of Santa Barbara on U.S. 101, is a popular spot for swimming, picnicking and surf fishing. The area was called "gaviota" (seagull) by soldiers from the Portola Expedition in 1769. Divers and surfers use a pier on the west end of the beach. A Southern Pacific railroad trestle crosses the creek above the day-use parking lot. Visitors can explore the upland portions of the park from a trailhead in the parking area. Gaviota Peak offers a view of the coast and the Channel Islands. For more information, call 968-1033.

La Purísima Mission State Historic Park is the site of Misión la Purísima Concepción de María Santísimas, one of the most completely restored of the 21 Spanish missions in California. The park is three miles northeast of Lompoc on Purísima Road. Founded in 1787, it is the largest and most authentic mission restoration project in the American West. The park contains the church, shops, quarters, springhouse, cemetery and mission gardens. The original mission was destroyed by an earthquake in 1812, and later rebuilt at its present location. During the 1930s, the National Park Service and the Civilian Conservation Corps restored many of the mission's adobe buildings.

The park features a Visitor Center with information, displays and artifacts. A self-guided tour takes visitors back in time for a glimpse of life in California in

the early 1880s. Special living history events are scheduled throughout the year. For more information, call (805) 733-3713.

This past year, more than 85.2 million visitors generated approximately \$2.6 billion in direct visitor spending in communities surrounding California State Parks throughout the state. When these dollars reverberate and are respent in these communities, the total economic impact is an estimated \$6.65 billion - enough to support more than 100,000 jobs throughout local communities statewide.

For the Central Coast area of Hearst Castle south to Pismo Beach, California State Parks estimates that annual visitation last year was 6.4 million people contributing more than \$267 million in direct spending in local communities, keeping more than 9,000 people employed.

For more information about California State Parks, visit us on line at:
www.parks.ca.gov

To make camping reservations, call (800) 444-PARK (7275) or go on line to: http://www.reserveamerica.com/client/client_ca.jsp

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