

Natural Beauty, Beaches and Birdwatching

California State Parks in Orange County Offer Something for Everyone

Orange County is known for its tourist attractions, and some of its finest natural destinations can be found in California State Parks.

Huntington State Beach, located opposite Magnolia Avenue on Pacific Coast Highway, features a two-mile-long sandy beach as well as a two-mile-long multi-use trail, a bicycle trail, picnic areas, volleyball nets, food concessions, and outdoor cold showers. Permanent lifeguards are on patrol in vehicles year round. Lifeguard towers are open during the summer season.

The park extends from Beach Boulevard in the town of Huntington Beach south to the Santa Ana River on the Newport Beach boundary. Pedestrian access is at Newland Street, Magnolia Street, Beach Boulevard, and Brookhurst Street with very limited street parking. The main vehicle entrance is located at Magnolia Street.

Disabled visitors can borrow a beach wheelchair at the Magnolia kiosk to get out to the water. (A call-ahead to reserve it is advised.) The park has six wheelchair access ramps that lead to the water. Also, each restroom in the park has at least one large accessible single-user restroom with grab bars. Although this is a day-use beach, it is open until 10 p.m. Gates close at 9 p.m. There are approximately 200 fire-rings available on a first come, first served basis.

Across from the beach is the 114-acre Huntington Beach Wetlands, operated by the California Department of Fish and Game.

Huntington State Beach is the site of a nesting sanctuary for the California least tern, a rare and endangered species. The beach is also sanctuary for the threatened snowy plover.

For more information, call (714) 536-1454 or (714) 848-1566.

Bolsa Chica State Beach, on Highway One between Sea Point Street and Warner Avenue in Huntington Beach, is connected to Huntington State Beach by a bike trail. The combined five-mile sandy beach is popular for wildlife viewing, surfing, and skating.

Bolsa Chica's 78-acre park also features a wheel-chair accessible beach. (Again, visitors are advised to call ahead to use the beach wheelchairs.) The beach also has grass areas for picnicking, as well as restrooms and food service. Approximately 200 fire-rings are available on a first come, first served basis. Bolsa Chica has camping for self-contained vehicles only. All structures at Bolsa Chica are new, with construction having been completed in 2003.

For more information, call (714) 846-3460 or (714) 377-5691.

Crystal Cove State Beach, off Pacific Coast Highway between Corona del Mar and Laguna Beach, features three miles of coastline as well as wooded canyons and open bluffs. The park is popular with swimmers, surfers, sunbathers as well as mountain bikers (inland) and scuba and skin divers (underwater.)

The beach is a winding, sandy strip, backed with nearby grassy terraces. The park has accessible picnic areas, restrooms, a paved pathway, and boardwalk.

The park's entire area offshore is an underwater nature preserve.

For more information, call (949) 494-3539 or (949) 492-0802.

Doheny State Beach, in Dana Point just south of the Marina, has 120 developed campsites - and some of them are just steps away from the beach. The beach is well known as a top-rated surfing spot. The park's visitor center features aquariums demonstrating sea and tidepool life. For more information, call (949) 496-6171 or (949) 492-0802.

San Clemente State Beach, off I-5 near the south end of the city of San Clemente, is a popular spot for surfers, body surfers and swimming. The park has a new visitor center, which is housed in a restored 1930's California

Conservation Corps cottage. The facility, which highlights local history, is open weekends 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The beach has accessible camping, restrooms, trail, and exhibits. Visitors are advised to call ahead to use the beach wheelchair.

The park has 157 campsites and 72 offer RV hookups. The 110-acres park has trails leading to the mile-long beach.

For more information, call (949) 492-3156 or (949) 492-0802.

San Onofre State Beach, south of San Clemente on I-5, has two campgrounds, the Bluffs and San Mateo. There is a 1.5-mile trail that leads to Trestles Beach, one of southern California's best-known surfing spots.

The 3,000-acre park has accessible camping, parking and restrooms.

For more information, call (949) 492-4872 or (949) 492-0802.

For camping reservations call ReserveAmerica at 800-444-7275 or go online to www.parks.ca.gov

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