

Tomales Bay State Park



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The mission of California State Parks is to provide 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.



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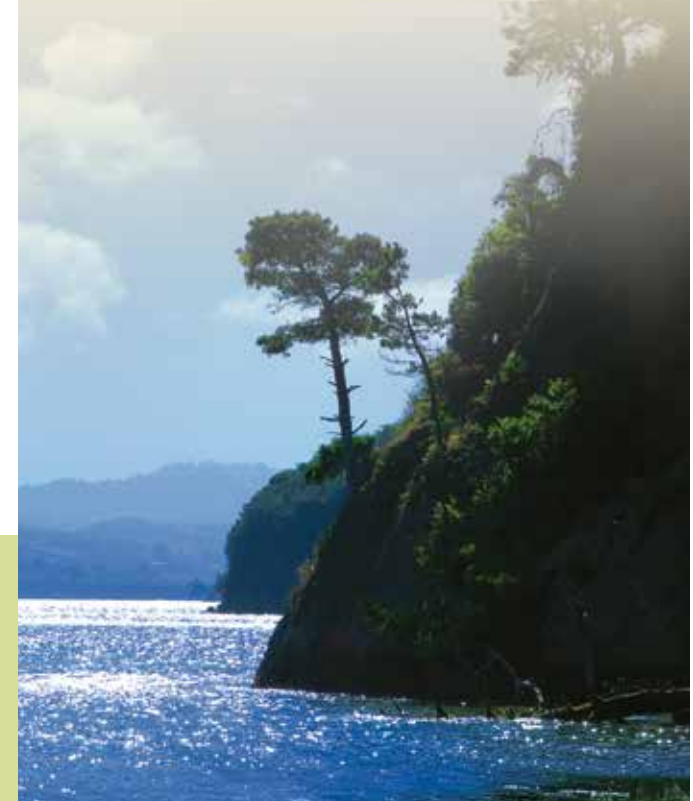
For information call: (800) 777-0369
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Tomales Bay State Park
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*Human impact on
the land is dwarfed
in comparison to the
influences of nature, time,
and the San Andreas
Fault—which lies directly
beneath the 12-mile
length of Tomales Bay.*



Situated on the eastern edge of

Point Reyes Peninsula, the blue waters and sheltered coves of Tomales Bay State Park are a popular destination for a day of picnicking, hiking, or water-oriented activities. The beaches and east-facing slopes of this 2,000-acre park are especially attractive because they are protected from the prevailing winds by the high backbone of the Point Reyes Peninsula. The park is located 40 miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge, close to Inverness, Point Reyes Station, and the Point Reyes National Seashore. The weather varies greatly. Be prepared for cool, damp, and windy weather.

CULTURAL HISTORY

For more than 8,000 years, the Coast Miwok have lived in what is now Marin and Sonoma counties. The native people used the area's abundant resources—hunting game, catching salmon and shellfish, and managing plants and grasses to assure plentiful harvests.

In 1579 Sir Francis Drake laid claim to the entire area for England, naming it Nova Albion (New England). Nearly 25 years later, Spanish explorer Don Sebastian Vizcaíno named the area now called Point Reyes “La Punta de Los Tres Reyes,” after the day of the Feast of the Three Kings. “Tomales” is thought to be a Spanish inflection of the Coast Miwok word for “bay.” Most of the Tomales Bay area lay untouched until the late 1940s, when developers discovered its beauty and began to purchase beachfront land. Local residents, fearing that the



Vista Point overlook

beaches would be closed to public use, formed a committee to help secure the land for park purposes. The Marin Conservation League, various other conservation and civic organizations, and the State purchased portions of the area. On November 8, 1952, Tomales Bay State Park was dedicated and opened to the public.

NATURAL HISTORY

Nature, time, and the San Andreas Fault—running directly beneath the 12-mile length of Tomales Bay—have had enormous impact on the land. The fault, a great rift in the earth's crust, separates Point Reyes Peninsula from the rest of the continent. Its granite bedrock is unlike any nearby formations. The nearest granite on the east face of the fault matching that of Point Reyes Peninsula is in the Tehachapi

Mountains, more than 300 miles southeast. Incredibly, movement of two inches per year over ten million years is sufficient to have caused the granite to travel that distance. In the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, the greatest measured displacement along the entire fault was at Tomales Bay, where the area west of the fault moved more than 20 feet northward.

PLANT COMMUNITIES

Trails take hikers through a lush wilderness of forests, beaches, fields, hills, meadows, and marshes—each with its own plant life. Among the most prominent trees are bishop pines, madrones, California laurels, oaks, red and white alders, willows, and buckeye.

One of the finest remaining virgin stands of bishop pine is preserved in the Jepson Memorial Grove. Bishop pines belong to a group of “closed-cone” pines—a species that has survived by adapting to the hard realities of wildfire. Closed-cone pine seeds are dispersed only when the trees are burned or their tightly sealed, prickly cones are opened by extreme heat.

Ferns grace the wooded areas. Wildflowers brighten the countryside with splashes of vivid color during the spring.



Bishop pine in the Jepson Memorial Grove

WILDLIFE

Wildlife thrives here. Foxes, raccoons, badgers, weasels, bobcats, skunks, wood rats, moles, and other animals inhabit the area. Numerous species of land and sea birds, including the rare spotted owl, attract ornithologists and birdwatchers. Several varieties of clams, jellyfish, crabs, and other small sea animals live on or near the beaches, and the bay is home to sharks, rays, and many other kinds of fish.



Spotted owl

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Water activities—Four gently sloping, surf-free beaches on the shore of Tomales Bay offer many opportunities for picnicking, swimming, hiking, clamming, kayaking, and boating. Heart's Desire Beach has a picnic



The peaceful, wind-protected beaches make this a popular water recreation area.

area with barbecues, dressing rooms, and flush toilets. Less-developed Pebble, Shell, and Indian Beaches can be accessed by way of easy trails. The shoreline has shallow areas suitable for wading and water play with well-marked swimming areas. Lifeguard services are not available.

There are no boat-launching facilities, but hand-carried boats may be put in the water. Heart's Desire Beach is used as a launch location by individuals and local companies offering organized kayaking excursions. Boaters are welcome to land at park beaches away from swim areas.

Hiking—Hiking trails connect the park's four beaches and wind through the Jepson Memorial Grove.

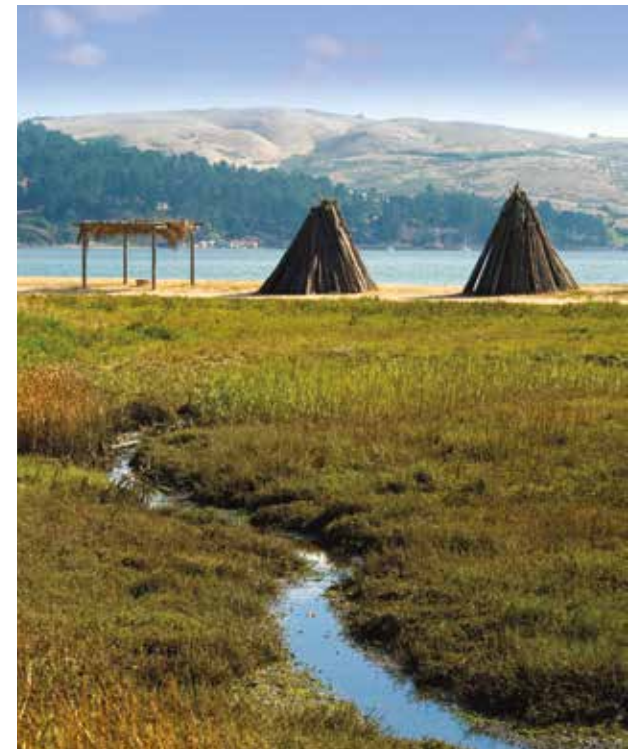
Interpretive feature—Indian Beach has two reconstructed Miwok bark shelters called "kotchas" that stand upright, forming tall cones. A self-guided nature trail connects Indian Beach to Heart's Desire Beach, about one half-mile south.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

Heart's Desire Beach, Vista Point, and Millerton Point have accessible restrooms. Picnic tables are accessible at Heart's Desire Beach.

PLEASE REMEMBER

- Except for service animals, pets are not permitted on beaches or trails.



Coast Miwok kotchas at Indian Beach

- All natural and cultural features are protected by law and must not be disturbed or removed.

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This park receives support in part through a nonprofit organization. For information, contact:
Marin State Parks Association, P.O. Box 285, Novato, CA 94948-0285

