

# Fort Ord Dunes State Park

## Monterey Bay Area State Beaches



### Our Mission

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.



California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the district office well in advance at (831) 649-2836. This publication can be made available in alternate formats. Contact [interp@parks.ca.gov](mailto:interp@parks.ca.gov) or call (916) 654-2249.

#### CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

P.O. Box 942896

Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

For information call: (800) 777-0369

(916) 653-6995, outside the U.S.

711, TTY relay service

[www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)

Discover the many states of California.™

**Monterey Bay Area State Beaches  
Along Highway 1  
From Monterey north to Moss Landing, CA  
(831) 649-2836**

© 2014 California State Parks

*Where the  
land meets the ocean,  
sheltered Monterey  
Bay forms a huge  
arc lined with sand,  
unbroken for miles.*



**M**onterey Bay's unique scenic qualities place it among the world's most beautiful locales. Six California state beach parks in Monterey County are aligned in the crescent fronting the natural wonders of Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

At Zmudowski, Moss Landing, Salinas River, Marina and Monterey state beaches and Fort Ord Dunes State Park, stroll along more than 20 miles of beach or just sit on the sand and watch the waves crest. The beaches along the half-moon of Monterey Bay afford sublime opportunities to watch wildlife, take photographs or merely inhale the bracing ocean air.

Coastal fog and wind are common, with average monthly temperatures ranging from the mid-40s to the low 70s.

## PARKS AREA HISTORY

### First People

For thousands of years, the Rumsien people moved their villages seasonally throughout the Monterey area to fish, hunt, and collect plants. The arrival of Europeans in California drastically changed the native lifestyle. Traditional food sources were depleted by the newcomers and their imported livestock; the two cultures clashed over native traditions and beliefs. Violence and

diseases to which the Rumsien people had no resistance decimated their population.

Today's descendants of the original native group are now working to retain their cultural heritage.

### European Explorers

In 1602, explorer Sebastián Vizcaíno named the natural port *Monterey* after the Viceroy el Conde de Monterey, commander of New Spain. His party recorded contact with native people in this area. Spanish King Carlos III wanted to expand Spain's presence in Baja California north to Alta California in the mid-1700s. Gaspar de Portolá's expedition came to Monterey in 1770 to establish a mission and a military presidio.

Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821, so Alta (upper) California also came under Mexican rule. After the mission lands were released from religious control in 1833, large land tracts (*ranchos*) were granted by the Mexican governor to former Spanish soldiers and others. Mexico ceded Alta California to the U.S. in 1848, and California became a state in 1850.

### NATURAL HISTORY

Five types of geologic landforms make up these dunes: beach strand, unstabilized active dunes, younger stabilized dunes (from

the early to mid-Holocene period), older stabilized dunes (from the late Pleistocene period), and dissected uplands divided by eroded areas.

The dunes support two insects of concern—the Smith's blue butterfly and the globose dune beetle. California legless lizards, resembling thin snakes with eyelids, dwell under the sand.

Offshore, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary protects myriad marine species in a huge submarine canyon.

Southern sea otters, seasonally migrating gray and humpback whales, dolphins and some leatherback sea turtles might be spied offshore. Harbor seals and California sea lions may haul up on any handy resting place.

Pelicans, grebes, Caspian terns and gulls fly over the sea, hoping to find such prey as surf perch, rockfish, squid and night smelt. Step carefully to avoid the nest of the western snowy plover, a small, threatened bird that blends into the beach sand.



Smith's blue butterfly





# ★ YOU'RE IN THE ARMY NOW ★

The U.S. Government purchased 15,000 acres in 1917 to be used for training troops assigned to the Presidio. "Camp Gigling" was used primarily for drilling soldiers and training cavalry and field artillery units. Its mess halls and cavalry horse stables were the first permanent structures, built in 1938 at Ord. The whole reservation was renamed Camp Ord in 1933. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) partially funded projects that included building Stilwell Hall, a blufftop club for enlisted soldiers. Stilwell Hall was paid for by a variety of means, including soldiers' donations. Many other WPA infrastructure construction and artistic mural projects were done at Ord between 1940 and 1943. (Two surviving Stilwell Hall murals are displayed at nearby California State University, Monterey Bay.) Camp Ord was renamed Fort Ord in August of 1940.



*Stilwell Hall*



*155 M.M. Howitzers Firing. Army Day Camp Ord. Calif 66  
April 6, 1940.*

During World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, Fort Ord became a key troop processing and training center. More than 1,500,000 soldiers trained at Fort Ord between 1940 and 1973, when the Selective Service System's military draft ended. The 7th Infantry Division (Light) Army volunteers took over the base from 1974 until Fort Ord was decommissioned in September 1994. Several buildings were removed, and coastal dune habitat restoration began. The Army transferred 979 coastal acres of the 28,000-acre fort to California State Parks in 2009.

Army training and combat readiness included rifle training. These dunes comprised numerous firing ranges that formed an essential part of the Army training and combat readiness. The Army removed 162,800 yards of lead-contaminated soil, and 719,000 pounds of spent ammunition were recovered. Coastal erosion necessitated demolition of the former soldiers' club, Stilwell Hall. Although the beach below its site has been returned close to its native state, many old Army bunkers remain in the dunes.

To preserve the fort's sensitive natural habitats as well as its scenic and cultural values, about 14,500 acres of the former military reservation became Fort Ord National Monument in 2012. Eighty-six miles of its multi-use trails may be explored.



*Camp Ord, 1940* ★



*A raft of otters at  
Elkhorn Slough*



## CALIFORNIA'S SEA OTTERS

A favorite among sea mammals, the bewhiskered southern sea otter was thought for many years to be extinct. Once ranging from Baja California to Alaska, otters were nearly exterminated by fur hunters in the 1700s and 1800s. In 1938, a rancher living at Bixby Creek Canyon, near Big Sur, spotted a group of sea otters floating on their backs in kelp. Through conservation, the otter population now ranges from Santa Barbara to Half Moon Bay. Researchers are studying the current causes of population decreases in the otter groups in the estuarine habitat of Elkhorn Slough.

### FASCINATING FACTS:

- Otters have the world's densest fur—more than 650,000 hairs per square inch—to insulate them against cold water.
- They must constantly groom their fur to coat it with oil and create cold-barrier air bubbles in the fur.
- A 60-pound otter must eat about 15 pounds of food each day to stay warm.
- Otters dive to the sea floor to find their food, but they use their chests as dining tables.
- To crack the shellfish that make up its diet, an otter places a rock on his chest and smashes the shell against it.
- Otters have front “pockets,” flaps of skin under their front legs, to store rocks, shellfish or other prey.

## THE BEACHES

More than 21 miles of coast link these six beachfront parks. Fishing from shore or small boat is allowed along these beaches. All anglers age 16 and over must carry a valid California fishing license. For complete rules and Marine Protected Area maps, visit [www.dfg.ca.gov](http://www.dfg.ca.gov).

Non-native iceplant and European beach grass have overtaken much of the sand dunes. Park staff and volunteers are restoring native vegetation by propagating and planting Monterey spineflower, sand gilia, coast wallflower, seacliff buckwheat, coast buckwheat and other native plants. Sandmat manzanita plants grow on some back dunes.

### Monterey State Beach

This state beach has two separate segments separated by a mile, from Monterey's Wharf #2 to the town of Sand City to the north. A gentle shelf of sand slopes into the bay, making this the only Monterey County state beach listed here that is safe for water recreation. Scuba divers, kayakers, waders and swimmers enjoy the beach.

The rest of these inviting beaches hold hidden dangers offshore. Heavy surf with extremely strong rip currents and undertow are common at the beaches north of Monterey. The submarine canyon drops off sharply near the tide line. Water recreation is not advised. Use caution even when wading, and do not allow children near the water without adult supervision.

For the protection of many sensitive species, no dogs are allowed on any state beaches north of Monterey's Wharf #2, except for trained service animals on leash.

### Fort Ord Dunes State Park

The serenity of this oceanfront park belies the fact that its 979 acres of dunes once resounded with rifle fire. Visitors enjoy jogging, bicycling, hiking and walking the beach. A cell phone tour explains varied historic and natural aspects of the park. Access the tour by calling (831) 998-9458. To protect endangered species, horses are not permitted. Leashed dogs are allowed on the accessible paved trail.

### Marina State Beach

Strong winds and tall dunes make Marina popular for hang-gliding, kite flying and radio-controlled gliders. The local hang-gliding club has a launch platform for rated pilots. Call (831) 649-2836 for rules.

### Salinas River State Beach

Among the birds frequenting this beach are California brown pelicans, red-tailed hawks, American kestrels, western snowy plovers, western gulls, black phoebes, western scrub-jays, California towhees, and white-crowned sparrows.

Salinas River Mouth Natural Preserve and Salinas River Dunes Natural Preserve form a portion of this park. A mile of dune trail begins in two of the three parking lots, and it links two coastal access points.



Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail





### **Moss Landing State Beach**

An idyllic setting north of the busy fishing port of Moss Landing, this beach unit adjoins the Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve. Hikers, surfers and kayakers may see many species of seabirds and shorebirds at this stopover on the Pacific Flyway.

Moss Landing is the site of Elkhorn Slough State Marine Conservation Area and State Marine Reserve. No fishing is allowed. For more information, see [www.parks.ca.gov/elkhorn](http://www.parks.ca.gov/elkhorn).

### **Zmudowski State Beach**

The Pajaro River Mouth Natural Preserve forms a portion of this beach south of the river.

**Horseback Riding** — Zmudowski, Moss Landing, and Salinas River state beaches allow horseback trail rides. To protect sensitive species, horses are restricted to the beaches' wet sand portion at the waterline, so check the tides before bringing horses to the beach.

### **STATE BEACH ADDRESSES**

- **Monterey State Beach**  
Seaside exit off Hwy. 218  
or Figueroa and Del Monte Avenue  
Monterey 93940
- **Fort Ord Dunes State Park**  
Lightfighter Dr. off Hwy. 1. Turn left onto  
2nd. Ave., then follow signs to park  
entrance at 8th St. overcrossing Hwy. 1.  
Lat: 36.6615 Long: -121.818  
Marina 93933
- **Marina State Beach**  
Foot of Reservation Rd. off Hwy. 1  
Lat: 36.698639 Long: -121.808879  
Marina 93933
- **Salinas River State Beach**  
Potrero exit from Highway 1  
Lat: 36.774067 Long: -121.793103  
Moss Landing 95039
- **Moss Landing State Beach**  
Jetty Road off Highway 1  
Lat: 36.816938 Long: -121.786004  
Moss Landing 95039
- **Zmudowski State Beach**  
Struve Road off Highway 1  
Lat: 36.83632 Long: -121.80147  
Moss Landing 95039

### **ACCESSIBLE FEATURES**

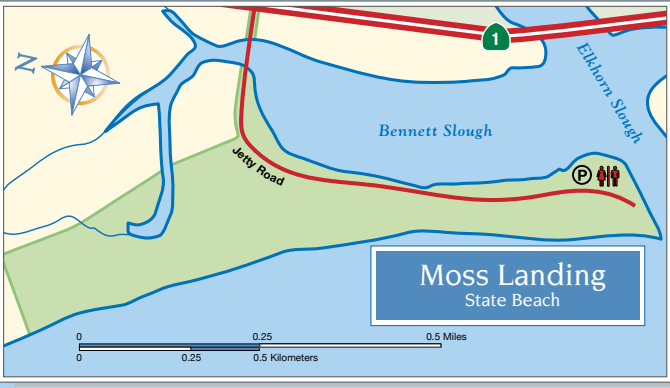
Fort Ord Dunes State Park has a level, paved parking lot with picnic tables. Marina State Beach has one accessible restroom. All other beaches have portable restrooms not deemed accessible. Accessibility is continually improving. For updates, visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

### **PLEASE REMEMBER**

- Protection and restoration of sensitive species are ongoing at these beaches.
- All natural and cultural features are protected by law and may not be disturbed or removed.
- Lock your car and remove valuables.
- Except for trained service animals, dogs are not allowed on most state beaches. Dogs on leash are allowed only at the south end of Monterey State Beach and on the paved trail at Fort Ord Dunes.
- **Swimming and water sports at most beaches are hazardous due to tides, currents and a steep dropoff near shore.**
- **No lifeguard services are available.**
- **These beaches are not staffed. For emergencies, call 911.**  
For other issues, call (831) 649-2836 on weekdays.



# Monterey Bay Area State Beaches



**Legend**

	Major Road		Picnic
	Paved Road		Restrooms
	Paved Multi-Use Path		Parking
	Trail: Hiking		
	Natural Preserve		
	State Marine Conservation Area Boundary		
	State Marine Reserve Boundary		

