

The Visitor Center and Park Headquarters occupy the old Spooner Ranch House.

MONTANA DE ORO - *The way it was*

For at least nine thousand years the ancestors of today's Chumash and Salinan people inhabited the San Luis Obispo county coast, adapting as needed to climatic and environmental changes. They lived in small extended family groups, traveling from the coast to the interior valleys and back to procure their diet of fish and shellfish, small and large game, waterfowl, grasses, and seeds. Shelter, tools and clothing were fashioned using resources available in the immediate area, and what could not be obtained or produced locally was provided through extensive trade networks.

In 1769, the first European overland expedition, led by Don Gaspar de Portolá, an emissary of the Spanish government, made its way up the coast of California from San Diego to Monterey. The expedition made inroads for Spanish missionaries who followed closely behind, precipitating sudden, drastic and irrevocable changes to the landscape and lifeways of the indigenous people.

In 1772, only three years after the Portolá expedition came through Alta California, Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa was established only a few miles from what is now Montaña de Oro State Park. Many of the indigenous people were taken into the mission system, leaving behind their settlements, and adopting new means of subsistence in the agricultural practices of the mission. Their population was decimated through disease and violence and long standing cultural traditions were practiced only in secret.

In 1821 Mexico gained independence from Spain. The Mexican government secularized the missions in 1833. After the mission period ended, native people and their descendants worked locally in agriculture, fishing and many other industries. Descendants of the native people continue to live in the area and have played an important role in the history of San Luis Obispo County. Modern Chumash and Salinan people today work diligently to protect and perpetuate their cultural traditions.

Following secularization of the missions, the Mexican government granted large tracts of what had been mission lands to political allies. Rancho Cañada de los Osos y Pecho y Islay was granted in 1845 by Governor Pio Pico to James Scott and John Wilson. The grant extended from the Pacific coast along Los Osos Creek and the Los Osos Valley almost to San Luis Obispo, and encompassed Montaña de Oro State Park and Los Osos.

The property changed hands several times. In the early 1890's, Alden B. Spooner II established a farm, dairy, and hog raising operation on a portion of the land, ultimately purchasing it in 1902. By 1917 Spooner was working 9,000 acres with six miles of ocean frontage. Spooner built a ranch house, a reservoir, several barns, a creamery powered by a water wheel, stables, and sheds. As there were no roads to transport his goods to market, Spooner built a warehouse on the south bluff above Spooner's Cove. Adjacent to the warehouse was a long chute reaching down to the ocean where goods could be loaded directly onto ships. Land on the marine terraces was leased to Japanese farmers who lived and grew vegetables there until their internment during World War II.

Spooner's neighbor to the north was Alexander S. Hazard who also raised crops and operated a dairy. Hoping to cash in on California's growing need for timber, in 1908 Hazard planted hundreds of Eucalyptus trees. Eucalyptus proved unsatisfactory for commercial use; however Hazard's legacy, row upon row of Eucalyptus trees, remains in the park today.

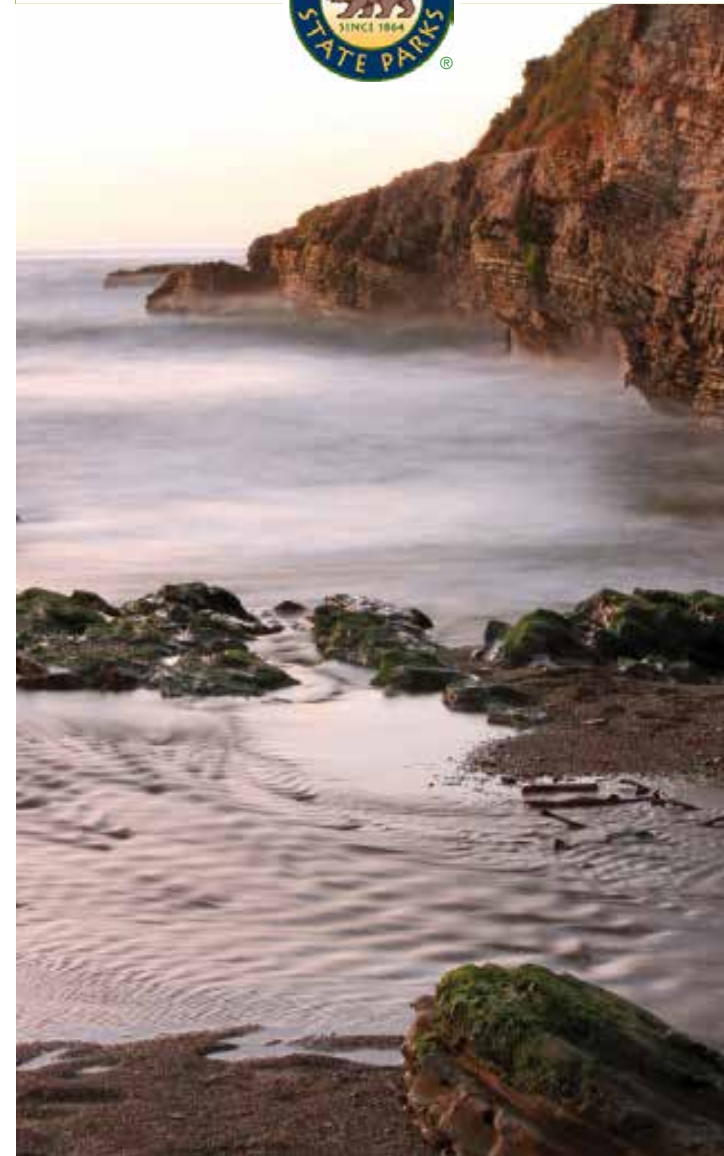
In the early 1940's Oliver C. Field purchased the ranch from the Spooner family, selling it 10 years later to Irene McAllister. In 1965 the land was purchased by the State of California for use as a park. It was decided to keep the name McAllister had given it: Montaña de Oro.



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Montaña de Oro State Park





MONTANA DE ORO - Today

With over 8000 acres, including seven miles of shoreline, Montaña de Oro is one of the largest state parks in California. Spectacular views, fresh breezes, and the sound of the pounding surf add up to invigorating, memorable visits.

More than half a million people visit Montaña de Oro each year because it offers a wonderful setting for outdoor activities everyone can enjoy like hiking, jogging, bicycling, horse back riding, camping, and surfing. You can explore the tide pools, watch for birds, look for plants and wildflowers, go surf fishing, or just sit and admire the scenery. There are picnic tables at Spooner's Cove, and miles of clean, sandy beaches.

Camping

A primitive campground in the canyon behind the Spooner Ranch House offers 47 campsites for tents, trailers, or motorhomes. The vehicle length limit for all trailers and motorhomes is 27 feet. Tables, firepits, drinking water, and primitive toilets are nearby. There are no showers or dump stations.

Some campers may prefer the walk-in environmental campsites, which are secluded but campers should not be surprised to wake up to the yapping of coyotes or the rustling of other nighttime creatures. For those who wish to bring horses to the park and camp overnight, there are six horse camps for family and group outings, complete with pipe corrals and limited parking for horse trailers. No horse rentals are available.



Exploring Montaña de Oro on Your Own

The predominant rock found in the park is Miguelito Shale.

These formations are about 5 to 6 million years old. Formerly ancient sea floor, it is composed of mudstone deposited millions of years ago when tiny fragments of once-living organisms drifted to the bottom of the sea and mixed with silt and sand. The mud solidified into thick layers of diatomite, clay porcellanite, dolomite, and chert.

Near the unstable western coast of this continent the Pacific Plate grinds against the North American Plate. This action has buckled and tilted the sedimentary layers, raising them out of the sea. Over time, erosion and wave action turned them into a sloping beach. The level of the ocean also changed as ice ages came and went. This process has been repeated several times over the past five to ten million years. You can see the successive marine terraces (former beaches) as you hike on the present bluff or climb the slopes of Valencia Peak.

The northern part of the park is a gigantic sand-pile. Ancient sand dunes are revealed in the bluffs at the south end of the sand spit, and you can walk for miles along the long finger of sand that separates the ocean and the Morro Bay estuary.

If you plan to hike, ride your horse or mountain bike in the park, please remember:

- Dogs are not permitted on any trails, beaches or undeveloped areas.
- Stay on designated trails. Mountain bikers should use only those trails marked for bicycles and equestrians only those trails marked for horses. Violators can be cited.
- You may camp overnight only in designated areas and with prior registration.
- Take water with you on any hike that lasts more than one hour. Be prepared to stay longer than you may have intended.
- Poison oak grows throughout the park.

Nature Programs

For those interested in the natural history of the park, rangers give programs during the summer. Docent-led walks are also given year-round. The interpretive garden south of the Ranch House identifies many of the park's plants.

Information

You can find camping and park information in the old Spooner Ranch House Visitor Center, located just above Spooner's Cove. State Park docents and staff are happy to assist you daily during the summer months and Thursday thru Sunday year round.

Visit our web site: www.parks.ca.gov

Reserve America: www.reserveamerica.com

Important phone numbers

Camping reservations: 1-800-444-7275

Museum of Natural History: 805-772-2694 ext. 0

EMERGENCY: 9-1-1





<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hike Only Hike and Bike Only Hike and Bike Only - ADA Hike and Horse Only Hike, Bike and Horse Dirt Road - Multi-Use Paved Road 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information/Visitor Center Parking Horse Trailer Parking Picnic Area with Restroom Restroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scenic View Gate Peak ADA Accessible Campground 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group Campground Environmental Campsite Kem Environmental Education Program (Camp KEEP) Campfire Center 	<p>MULTI-PURPOSE TRAIL</p> <p>TRAVEL AT A SAFE SPEED ANNOUNCE YOURSELF WHEN APPROACHING OTHERS</p>	<p>Contour Interval 100 Feet</p> <p>0 0.5 1 Mile</p> <p>0 2 Kilometers</p> <p>Map by Kelli Schorher • www.geobispo.com</p>
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Emergencies in the Park

Emergency situations occur in the park from time to time. If you encounter one, immediately notify park personnel of its nature and location. If you cannot find park personnel quickly, call 9-1-1 and give the information to the emergency dispatcher. There are telephones at the Ranch House and Sand Spit Day Use area.

During large-scale emergencies, local officials may use the Early Warning System Sirens to alert the public that action may be necessary. The sirens emit a steady sound for three minutes and can be heard throughout the park. If you hear the sirens while visiting the park, return to your car immediately. Tune to a local

radio station for emergency information and instructions. If action is required, you will be directed what to do.

Park personnel may also notify you of an emergency through a public address system or by visiting camping areas. Helicopters may be used to alert hikers in the back country. If you are asked to leave the park or take some other action, do so safely and as quickly as possible.

No one expects an emergency to arise — but it's smart to be prepared for the unexpected.

Siren Info

If you hear a steady siren for three minutes, go indoors and tune to a local radio or television station for information. When at sea, tune to Marine Channel 16.