



California State Parks Video Transcript



Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park Orientation Video

Coast Redwoods are the tallest trees in the world, some reaching three-hundred-and-sixty feet above your head. To truly appreciate their size, walk among them.

Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park offers over seventy miles of trails ranging from leisurely strolls to all day hikes. The Five-Minute Trail offers an opportunity to stroll through a stand of ancient trees, including several hollowed out naturally by fire with a telescopic view of the sky.

On the Revelation Trail you get a chance to employ all your senses, discovering the wonders of the forest environment. Developed for the visually-impaired, this all-access trail offers an easy walk and a close look at many fine trees. Both the Five-Minute and the Revelation begin right behind the Visitor's Center.

The Self-Guided Nature Trail is another way to learn about the redwood ecosystem. This 1.2-mile walk begins from the front of the Visitor's Center and highlights many of the forest's unique and interesting features.

In the early 1850s the Miners' Ridge and James Irvine Trails were the main routes to the gold on Gold Bluffs Beach. Today, explorers come for different reasons--to see the magnificent ancient forest and to explore the treasure of Fern Canyon. This eleven-mile loop hike will take most of a day but is unsurpassed in beauty and diversity--truly a World Heritage Site experience.

Our lives are richer because of the coast redwood forest's existence, and it's our challenge to experience the remaining forest without causing damage. This is really very easy to do: Stay on designated trails; enjoy the plants, but leave them in place to delight the next passerby; watch but don't disturb or feed the wildlife; keep the park litter-free and use bear-proof trashcans; use bicycles on designated trails only; and keep family pets off all trails. You will be doing your part to preserve this wonder for future generations. To help you plan your stay, a map showing all the trails in the park is available in the bookstore.

Rich and varied, the ecology of a coast redwood forest is divided into distinct layers that are home to a specialized few plants and animals. As silent as the forest seems, each of these layers is alive with activity, and the best way to get a look at the plants and animals that call this forest home is to know where to look for them.

California State Parks Video Transcript
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Towering three-hundred-and-sixty feet overhead, the dense green canopy of the coast redwood forest captures most of the life-giving sunlight. High in the trees, forest residents like spotted owls and marbled murrelets struggle to survive. These animals depend on the massive old growth trees for nesting sites and access for food sources.

Sunlight that manages to filter through the redwood canopy is eagerly competed for at the next layer, where douglas fir, western hemlock, sitka spruce, and big leaf maple provide shelter for several species of mammals and birds. Winter wren and an occasional american robin dart from limb to limb. Bats, squirrels, and chipmunks take advantage of tree hollows for shelter and food.

Just above ground level, shrubs and ferns provide excellent homes for a variety for animals. Salmonberry, huckleberry, and rhododendron shade crystalline creeks where salmon and cutthroat trout spawn. Creeksides are home to giant pacific salamanders, roughback newts, and tail frogs. Black bear, mountain lion, and elk harvest the bounty along the fringes of the forest.

Gentle winds and heavy rains cleanse the forest's many layers, transporting seeds and adding material that creates a thick carpet that covers the forest floor. This is the final layer, and its role is critical to the health of the entire forest. Many plants such as the redwood violet and the clover-like oxalys actually prefer the dense shade found on the forest floor. Molds, gophers, and earthworms tunnel and aerate the soil, while banana slugs, fungi, mosses, and insects transform fallen debris--called "duff"--into rich organic matter, which returns nutrients to all living plants and provides the opportunity for the forest to perpetuate itself.

What wondrous stories a two-thousand-year-old redwood might tell of its life, of fire and earthquake, of flood and drought, and of the powerful hand of man. Ninety-six percent of the original forest has been logged in less than one hundred years. Walk among these remaining giants, and you'll discover their power and majesty.

Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park offers a unique wildlife viewing opportunity. In fact, before you came into the Visitor's Center, it's likely that just outside you saw a herd of roosevelt elk, grazing and tending to their young.

Watch for elk in open grasslands or out on Gold Bluffs Beach. During early fall you might witness the annual "rut" when mature bull elk compete for dominance and the right to reproduce. During the spring calving season and fall "rut" be especially cautious near the elk. These animals weight eight-hundred to one-thousand pounds and are not tame.

Other large, but less often seen, park residents include the mountain lion and black bear. Finding enough to eat is always a problem for black bears. They may become aggressive once they discover people food, which is filling, fattening, and easy pickings. Normally very shy of humans, black bear can quickly become park beggars.

Mountain lions on the other hand are secretive and will normally try to avoid busy areas, but please use caution when hiking. Keep small children near you. If confronted by a mountain lion, try to appear big and fight back if attacked.

California State Parks Video Transcript
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Prairie Creek is also home to many smaller, less glorified creatures, too. Raccoons, porcupine, otter, bobcat, and, yes, the banana slug are all permanent residents.

The park's animals are not captive, nor are they tame. They stay here because this is their home, the place they can find food, shelter, and safety. Parks provide the last frontier for many wild animals; we should visit their home with their needs in mind. No matter whether you're enjoying a picnic, a day of hiking, or several nights of camping, please remember that you are their guest. Be respectful, give them plenty of room, pick up your mess and be very careful with your food, and never interfere with their activities.

Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park, along with Del Mar Coast Redwoods State Park, Jedidiah Smith Redwoods State Park, and Redwood National Park, form a management partnership that are jointly recognized internationally as a World Heritage Site. This area has so much to offer, why not take a few extra days to investigate its many wonders?

Heading north from the Prairie Creek Visitor's Center along the Drury Parkway, there are numerous turnouts and trailheads along the way, inviting you to explore this park more fully.

One-quarter mile north, turn right onto Cal-Barrel Road. It's a three-mile scenic road, offering spectacular and intimate views of these ancient trees. While in good condition, this narrow packed-gravel road is unsuitable for trailers and motor homes.

Approximately one-half mile north of Cal-Barrel Road, turn right into the large Big Tree parking area. Walk a short distance on the paved trail to view Big Tree, which is over three-hundred feet tall and twenty-one feet in diameter.

The parkway reconnects with Highway 101 in about ten miles. About eight miles beyond that point, take a left turn to Requa and splendid views of the Klamath River.

Further north on Highway 101, Wilson Creek is an ideal spot for a picnic and the opportunity to take in a view of the Pacific Ocean and the rocky headlands. Just thirty-two miles north of Prairie Creek is picturesque Crescent City Harbor.

Continuing on Highway 101 through Crescent City, take Highway 199 to Jedidiah Smith Redwoods State Park. The park not only embraces the wild and scenic Smith River, but also offers a leisurely drive on Howland Hill Road, past Stout Grove, and over nine-thousand acres of ancient redwoods.

Travelling south from Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park Visitor's Center, head south along Drury Parkway until it connects with Highway 101. Drive three more miles south on Highway 101, then turn right onto Davison Road. The road is narrow and offers limited access to vehicles travelling to Gold Bluffs Beach. It's a good idea to allow at least several hours to more fully enjoy the beauty of the wild beach, bluffs, and exquisite Fern Canyon.

Further south on Highway 101, enjoy the spectacular panoramic view of the estuary at the Stone Lagoon Visitor's Center. A spotting scope is installed on the deck offering a great opportunity to enjoy the view, bird watching, and perhaps a closer inspection of yet another

California State Parks Video Transcript
Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park Orientation Video

herd of elk. For a more secluded beach-combing and picnic site, try Dry Lagoon Day Use Area, one mile south of Stone Lagoon.

Patrick's Point State Park, twenty-five miles south of Prairie Creek, not only offers magnificent coastal panoramas, camping and hiking, beach combing for agate and other semi-precious gems, but also an authentic reconstructed Yurok village known as Sumeg. Just south of Patrick's Point State Park, Trinidad State Beach is another ideal location for a picnic.

Victorians abound in Arcadia, Eureka, and Ferndale, including the elaborate Carson Mansion. In Eureka, don't miss Fort Humboldt State Historic Park, with its reconstructed fort buildings and interpretive displays, a logging museum, and historic logging equipment.

Continuing south, Humboldt Redwoods State Park, along the Avenue of the Giants, offers over fifty-thousand acres of redwoods. Don't miss the Rockefeller Forest, Founders Grove, and the Eel River.

An auto tour brochure is available at several locations along the Avenue. For more information while in this area, stop by the Visitor's Center at the park, just south of Weott. Ancient redwood forests, abundant wildlife, historic sites, wild and scenic landscapes, and dramatic coastline all await your discovery.

Running Time: 14 minutes
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