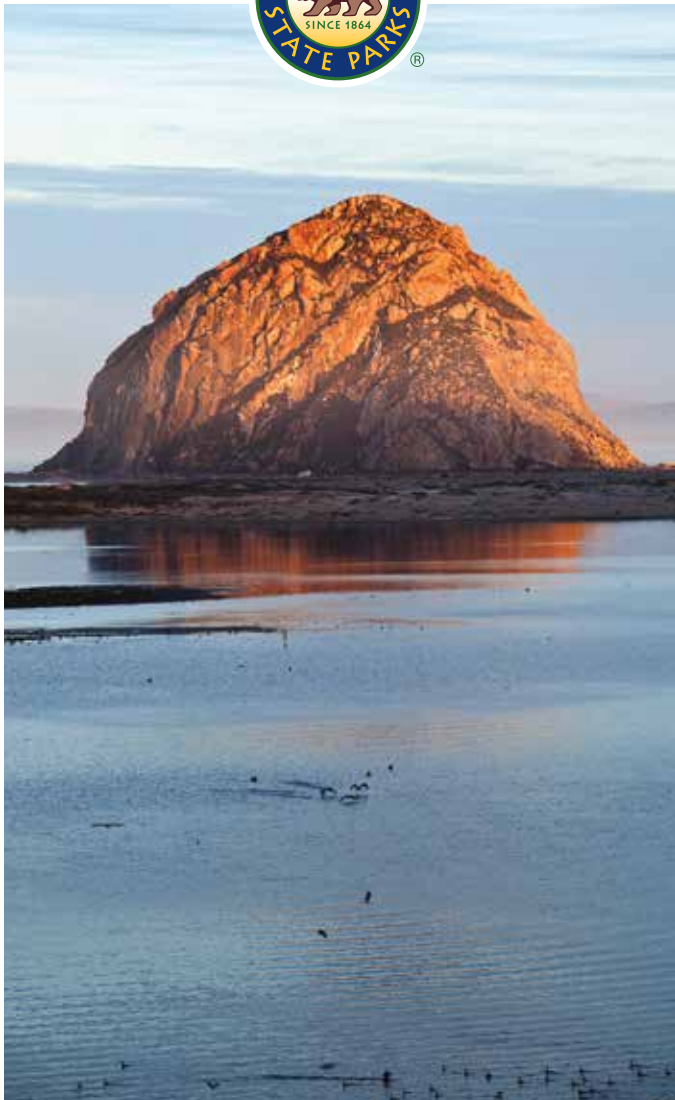


Morro Bay State Park



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 park at **(805) 772-7434**. If you need this publication in an alternate format, contact interp@parks.ca.gov.

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

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Morro Bay State Park

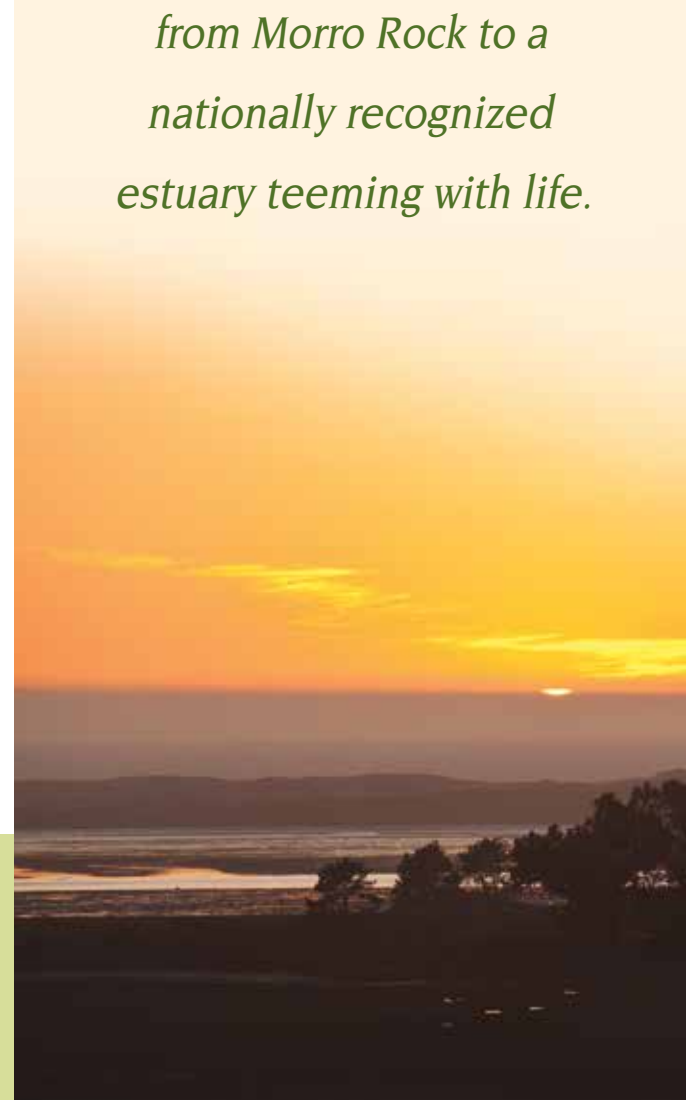
State Park Road

Morro Bay, CA 93442

(805) 772-7434

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*Morro Bay State Park
blends rich history and
unique beauty with
diverse resources—
from Morro Rock to a
nationally recognized
estuary teeming with life.*



Morro Bay State Park looks out over the bay to wind-sculpted sand dunes. Guarding the harbor entrance of the central coast's Morro Bay, Morro Rock has been a landmark for mariners over the centuries. The park includes the Morro Bay State Park Museum of Natural History, Morro Rock Natural Preserve, the Heron Rookery Natural Preserve, and the highly acclaimed Morro Bay State Park Golf Course. Amenities include a marina, restaurant, campground, and picnic areas. A butterfly grove sometimes hosts overwintering Monarchs from November into February. The climate is mild year round.

PARK HISTORY

Native People and Spanish Explorers

For many millennia before European contact, ancestors of the people who today call themselves Chumash or Salinan lived on the central coast. Seasonally, they traveled inland, using the area's marine and terrestrial resources.

The first European overland expedition into the Morro Bay area was led by Don Gaspar de Portolá in 1769. Soon after, the first

missions in California were established—drastically changing the lives of the native people. Most of them left their settlements and were taken into the mission system, adopting the agricultural practices of the missions. The number of indigenous people dwindled in the face of European disease and diminishing traditional food sources.

When missions were secularized in 1833, newly independent Mexico began granting land to Mexican citizens. Four such grants were made near Morro Bay. The Mexican-American War concluded in 1848, and in 1850 California became part of the United States.

Becoming a State Park

Morro Bay became a popular tourist destination beginning in the 1890s. A construction boom that peaked in the 1920s was halted by the economic crash of 1929, causing speculators to go bankrupt and new subdivisions to languish as empty lots.

The Cabrillo Country Club had opened on the present state park site a few months



CCC-built "comfort station," ca. 1934

before the crash. The club's developers desperately sought a buyer, and the residents of Morro Bay pushed for the State to acquire the land as a state park. The State took possession of the property in 1934.

Civilian Conservation Corps

Started in 1933 as one of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) created work for unemployed young men. The CCC arrived at the property on May 11, 1934, and began transforming the former country club into a state park. The finely crafted stone features seen in the park today were built by the CCC and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Morro Rock from Morro Bay State Park Museum of Natural History



From left to right: Accessible Marina Peninsula Trail, California fuchsia, Museum of Natural History from Morro Bay

NATURAL HISTORY

Plant and Animal Life

The diverse vegetation in 2,700-acre Morro Bay State Park includes grasslands, freshwater riparian, saltmarsh, and coastal sage scrub habitats.

The bay is an important stop on the Pacific Flyway, providing seasonal feeding grounds for more than a hundred species of migratory birds, sometimes numbering in the thousands.

Heron Rookery Natural Preserve

Double-crested cormorants, great egrets, and great blue herons can be spotted roosting in trees on the point north of the Museum of Natural History. Many active nests provide excellent bird watching between February and June.

Great blue heron



Morro Estuary Natural Preserve

In this 800-acre wetland, fresh water mixes with ocean tides. Estuaries are rich and productive habitats, providing spawning grounds and nurseries for numerous wetland wildlife species.

On the southeast shore of the estuary, rare coastal dune scrub habitat—the Elfin Forest's diminutive, wind-pruned oak trees—provides homes for a variety of mammals, birds, and reptiles.

Trails follow the edge of the estuary and wind into the hills above the bay.

Morro Rock Natural Preserve

The spectacular rock at the entrance to Morro Bay is a 23-million-year-old volcanic plug; many similarly rounded and dramatic outcroppings occur in a line between Morro Bay and San Luis Obispo. Morro Rock is home to nesting American peregrine falcons.

Once endangered, the falcons nest high on the rock, where they are well situated for their frequent feeding forays. **It is illegal to climb Morro Rock.**



Peregrine falcon

Museum of Natural History

Situated high on White's Point, the museum commands a spectacular view of the bay. The museum's interactive exhibits show how natural forces—including humans—affect Earth's environment and all life.

Natural and cultural interpretive programs such as exhibits, hikes, talks, and special events are offered by the museum staff. Presentations are also offered for school groups to complement school curricula. For more information and schedules, please contact the museum at (805) 772-2694. The museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Days.

Marine Protected Areas in California

Formed as a result of the Marine Life Protection Act, California's marine protected areas (MPAs) are marine or estuarine areas set aside to protect the diversity and abundance of marine life and marine ecosystems.

California State Parks works with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the City of Morro Bay, and the Morro Bay National Estuary Program to provide a balance between wildlife protection and human recreational activities.

The Morro Bay State Marine Recreational Management Area permits some limited recreational fishing and hunting. The Morro Bay State Marine Reserve has the most protected classification, where all living marine resources are protected and must remain undisturbed.

When hiking, kayaking, and exploring the shores and waters of the estuary, please give wildlife space. If any animal such as a bird, otter, or sea lion notices you, back away and give them enough space to rest, breed, and feed. See www.wildlife.ca.gov.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Activities include camping, boating, fishing, water sports, hiking, biking, and bird watching.

Marina—The small boat marina features rental canoes, kayaks, and a café. Kayaking is a popular activity in the bay, but to be safe, check the tide schedule before embarking.

Golf Course—Located on the hills above the campground, this 18-hole course offers



The Marina

sweeping views of the bay, the estuary, Morro Rock, and the ocean beyond. The course is open to the public and includes a driving range, pro shop, and café.

Camping—The campground includes 134 campsites in addition to two group camps, restrooms, showers, RV hook-up sites, and an RV dump station. Firewood is sold



Overview of Morro Estuary Natural Preserve from Black Hill



Morro Bay State Park Golf Course

on site; visit www.firewood.ca.gov. For camping information and reservations, call (800) 444-7275 or visit www.parks.ca.gov.

Picnicking—Picnic facilities are available for day use throughout the park.

Trails—Hiking on the park's many trails is a favorite pastime. Mountain bikes are welcome on many of these trails. These trails take hikers along chaparral-, tree-, and grass-covered hillsides, with beautiful views of the estuary and mud flats. **Please stay on trails.**

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

- Museum of Natural History: parking lot, exhibits, unisex restroom, trailhead, picnic tables, and the Museum Loop Trail
- Campgrounds: picnic sites, restrooms, five campsites, and one group site



Mountain biking in the Black Hill area

- Marina: unisex restroom, Marina Peninsula Trail, and kayak launch ramp
- Trails: Inn at Morro Bay Nature Trail (1,000 feet) and Marina Peninsula Loop Trail and Boardwalk (.7 miles)
Accessibility is continually improving. See updates at <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Morro Strand State Beach
2 miles north of Morro Bay on Hwy. 1
(805) 772-7434 or (805) 772-8812
- Montaña de Oro State Park
3550 Pecho Valley Road, Los Osos 93402
(805) 772-7434
- Los Osos Oaks State Natural Reserve
Los Osos Valley Road, Los Osos 93402
(805) 772-7434

PLEASE REMEMBER

- All natural and cultural features are protected by law and may not be disturbed or removed.
- Camp and park within designated areas.
- Dispose of wastewater and trash properly.
- Keep campfires in designated rings only.
- Do not gather wood.
- Quiet hours are from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m.
- Generators must not be used between 8 p.m. and 10 a.m.
- Do not leave your dog unattended. Dogs must be on a leash (6' maximum). Except for service animals, dogs are not permitted on beaches and trails.

This park receives support in part through a nonprofit organization.

For more information, contact:

Central Coast State Parks Association
P.O. Box 445, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406
(805) 548-0390 • www.ccspa.info

