

*This awe-inspiring shoreline offers a wealth of opportunities for wholesome fun. Whether you like to stroll along the beach, fish, sunbathe or settle down for a family picnic, you will be able to create many unforgettable moments.*

## 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 (707) 875-3483. This publication is available in alternate formats by contacting:

### **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.™**

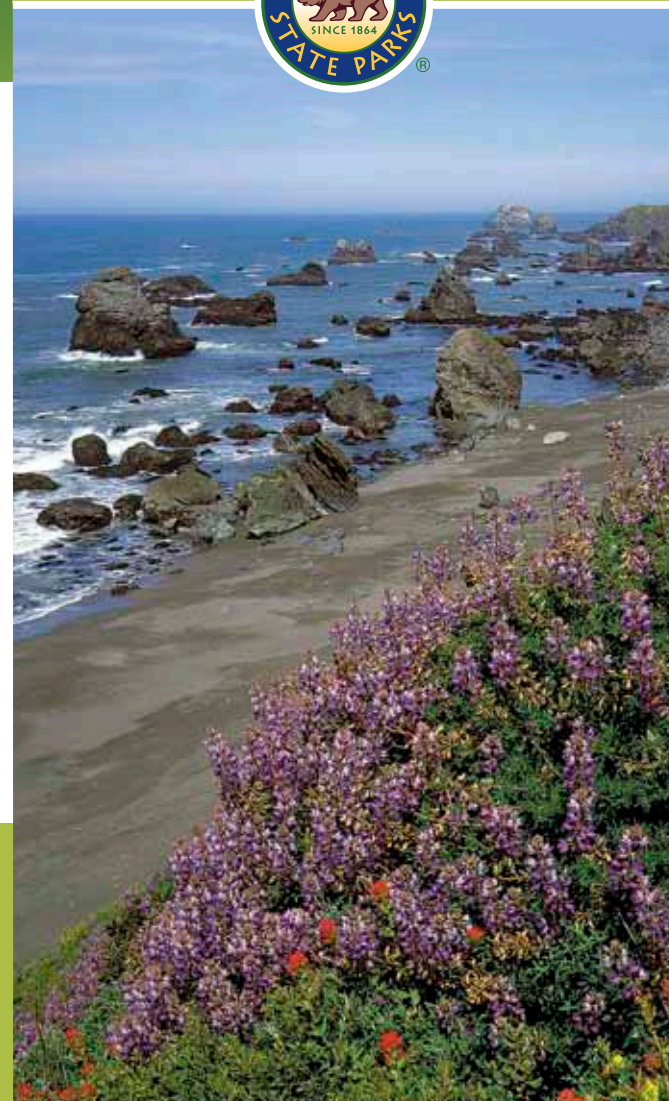
### **Sonoma Coast State Park**

**3095 Highway 1**

**Bodega Bay, CA 94923**

**(707) 875-3483 or (707) 865-2391**

# Sonoma Coast State Park



**I** **mag**ine broad, sandy beaches, secluded coves, rugged headlands, natural arches, a craggy coastline with fertile tide pools and offshore reefs—this is Sonoma Coast State Park, one of California's most scenic attractions. A series of beaches separated by rocky bluffs, Sonoma Coast has 16 miles of some of the most breathtaking scenery in the world.

The weather here is often a chilly combination of wind and fog. During the summer months, the morning fog usually burns off to create pleasant, sunny afternoons. Even during the summer, however, visitors are wise to dress for the possibility of wet, cold and windy north coast weather.

### **NATIVE AMERICANS**

The dominant native groups in this area were the Pomo and Coast Miwok, whose presence dates back about 3,000 years. Pomo territory once encompassed much of today's Mendocino, Lake and Sonoma counties.

Farther south, the Coast Miwok occupied part of Sonoma County and what is now Marin County. These groups built seasonal villages of redwood bark houses along rivers and streams and near today's Bodega Bay. Both groups were accomplished basket makers. The Russian and Aleutian fur trappers who arrived in the area in the early



*Bodega Head*

1800s may have been the Pomo and Miwok people's first contact with non-natives.

The Pomo and the Miwok were among several native groups who actively resisted the servitude forced on them, first by the Russian trappers, and later by Spanish missionaries and hordes of gold seekers. Native resistance was largely unorganized, usually taking the form of sabotage, random attacks or flight into the surrounding countryside. However, within a generation or two, direct conflict and exposure to European diseases nearly decimated them. Today Pomo and Miwok descendants still occupy parts of these ancestral lands, keeping alive the old ways and passing them on to the next generation.

### **PLANT COMMUNITIES**

The bluffs, slopes and dunes that frame the many beaches support a hardy ground cover of native shrubs, grasses and wildflowers.

In the spring these areas are particularly beautiful, with displays of yellow and blue lupine, sea pink, Indian paintbrush, western wallflower, verbena and dozens of other species of native wildflowers.

In 1951 a program was begun to stabilize the drifting sand and keep it from filling Bodega Bay. The dunes between the bay and Salmon Creek were planted with specialized grasses, including European beach

grass, a species used to protect dikes in the Netherlands. This species is now considered invasive, so California State Parks staff and volunteers are removing the beach grass wherever possible.



*Harbor seals*

### **WILDLIFE**

Many types of animals make their homes in this lush coastal environment. A lucky visitor might catch a glimpse of raccoons, rabbits, black-tailed deer, skunks, squirrels, or, on rare occasions, elusive gray foxes or badgers. The Sonoma Coast is also rich in bird life, with some 300 identified species. The many shore birds and other waterfowl in the area include willets, godwits, gulls, cormorants, pelicans, coots and many species of ducks. Among the land birds thriving here are quail, ravens, wrens, hawks, owls and swallows. **Whales**—From December through April, volunteers assist visitors at Bodega Head in viewing the annual gray whale migration from Alaska to Baja California and back. **Seals**—The Sonoma Coast, especially the mouth of the Russian River, is home to hundreds of harbor seals. From March

through June, seal pups are born unable to swim and defenseless against predators when left alone. Solitary pups have neither been abandoned nor are they ill—their mothers are feeding offshore. People who approach the pregnant females and newborn pups too closely are considered a serious threat. The seemingly tame seals frighten easily, and—like all wild animals—can inflict serious bites. Do not touch any of the pups, and keep your distance from any beached seal.

**Tide pool creatures**—Please do not disturb the life in the tide pools. Even the simple act of turning over a rock and exposing the invertebrates to the sun or air can destroy them. These delicate animals usually die after being removed from their habitat. State law protects many species; check with park rangers and lifeguards, or consult the latest sport fishing regulations for information on licensing, species, season, size and bag limit.

## ACTIVITIES

**Fishing**—The ocean, bay and river frontage of the Sonoma County coast are an angler's paradise. Sport fishing species include rockfish, perch, salmon, steelhead and smelt, as well as red abalone, mussels and cockles. A valid California sport fishing license is required.

**Picnicking**—At Bodega Head, Bodega Dunes, Rock Point, Duncans Landing, Wright's Beach and Goat Rock Beach, picnic tables and wide stretches of sandy beach entice visitors to stop and watch the surf pound against the rugged coastline. Most day-use areas have restroom facilities nearby.

**Camping**—Wright's Beach Campground has 30 developed sites near the beach. No shower facilities are available. At Bodega Dunes Campground, 98 developed sites have restrooms, a campfire center, hot pay showers and an RV sanitation station. Advance reservations can be made through [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov) or call (800) 444-7275.

**Environmental Camping**—Pomo Canyon and Willow Creek environmental campgrounds are available first come, first served only. The Willow Creek Campground is about a half-mile east of Highway 1 on Willow Creek Road. The Pomo Canyon Campground is 2 miles farther along Willow Creek Road.

**Riding and Hiking**—Equestrians and hikers can access the park's five-mile trail system through the Bodega Dunes, via Bay Flat Road. Horses are allowed onto Salmon Creek Beach if they stay on the trail, but are not allowed north of the picnic area. The Kortum Trail begins at Wright's Beach and travels north to Blind Beach. The Pomo Canyon Trail, out of the Shell Beach parking lot, winds over the hill 3 1/2 miles to the Pomo Canyon Campground.

**Jenner Visitor Center**—Learn about the natural and cultural history of the Jenner area while enjoying a spectacular view of the Russian River. This volunteer-staffed facility is open only on weekends through the summer months.

## SURF SAFETY

The beaches along the Sonoma Coast are not recommended for swimming or wading. The very things that make this area such a spectacular place to look at and enjoy can be lethal to those caught unaware along the shoreline.

Large surf, cold water temperatures, backwash, sudden drop-offs, pounding shorebreak and dangerous rip currents can turn what seem like safe activities, such as playing near the surf line, wading or climbing on rock outcroppings, deadly.

Lifeguard service is limited along the Sonoma Coast. Check with on-duty park staff about the ocean conditions. Please be aware that conditions can change quickly along this coastline.



Goat Rock

**Ocean Waves**—Waves can be unpredictable. Large waves can sweep the shoreline even on days when most of the surf looks tame. These large waves have been the cause of many drownings over the years and can catch those close to the shoreline by surprise, washing them into the cold, turbulent water.



*Portuguese Beach*

Most victims were climbing on rocks and cliffs, playing near or in the surf, or shore fishing.

**Rip Currents**—These powerful, channeled water currents flow away from shore. They typically extend from the shoreline, through the surf zone, and past the line of breaking waves. Rip currents can occur at any beach with breaking waves.

If you are caught in the seaward rush of a rip current, do not panic or attempt to swim directly to the shore against the strong current. Swim parallel to the shore until you are out of the rip current, then swim to shore at an angle away from the rip current.

The rip current usually dissipates just beyond the surf line. At this point, you may swim around the current and back to shore.

In an emergency, dial 911. Remain calm. Have someone spot the person in trouble or keep your eyes on the person. Give your location and stay on the line with the dispatcher. Do not attempt a water rescue yourself; wait for trained professionals.

## ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

- Four campsites and restrooms/showers at Bodega Dunes are accessible. Willow Creek has two accessible campsites and restrooms. Pomo Canyon has a designated accessible campsite on hard-packed dirt with parking 200 feet away.
- Wind-blown sand is common at Wright's Beach and Bodega Dunes.
- Wright's Beach has accessible picnic areas and restrooms.
- The picnic area near Vista Trail has four accessible picnic sites and a generally accessible pit toilet in the parking area.
- The Vista Trail is a .7-mile accessible asphalt trail overlooking coastal bluffs.
- Beach wheel chairs are available. Please contact the park in advance to make arrangements for use at (707) 875-3483.
- For the latest accessibility updates, visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov> or call (916) 445-8949.

### NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Armstrong Redwoods SNR  
7 miles north of Guerneville on Armstrong Woods Road, (707) 869-2015
- Austin Creek SRA  
7 miles north of Guerneville on Armstrong Woods Road (via the same entrance as Armstrong Redwoods SNR, (707) 869-2015
- Fort Ross State Historic Park  
12 miles north of Jenner on Highway 1, (707) 847-3286/865-2391

## PLEASE REMEMBER

- The shale formations of bluffs and rocks are unstable and unsafe for climbing. Stay on trails and heed fences and warning signs.
- Ground fires are permitted only in department-maintained fire rings. Beach fires are prohibited.
- Wood gathering is not permitted. Firewood may be purchased at either Bodega Dunes or Wright's Beach campgrounds.
- Dogs must always be on a leash. In order to protect sensitive wildlife, dogs are not allowed on any trails, Goat Rock Beach or Salmon Creek beaches.
- No drinking water is available at the environmental campsites. Bring an adequate supply for your stay.
- Vehicles may not be driven into the environmental camp sites. Camping in a recreational vehicle in the parking area is not permitted.
- Pets are not allowed in the environmental campgrounds. Wildlife will avoid places where domestic animals are kept.
- Swimming or wading in the ocean is not recommended.
- Keep your site clean. When you leave, it should look as though no one had ever been there.
- Park Headquarters is located one mile north of Bodega Dunes campground on Highway 1.



**Sonoma Coast State Park**

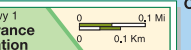
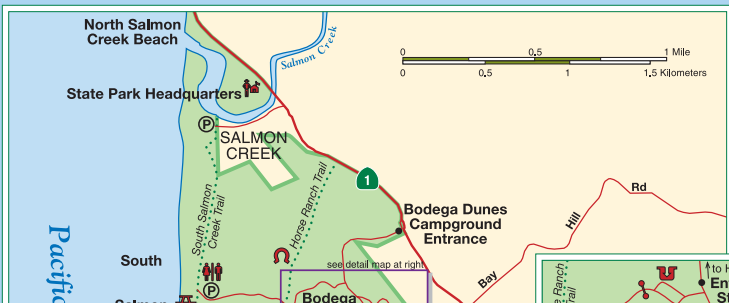
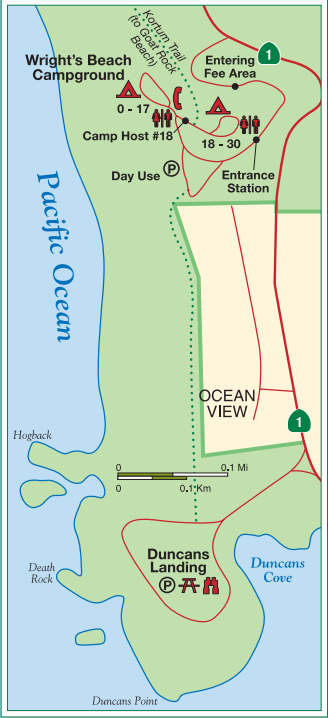
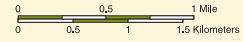


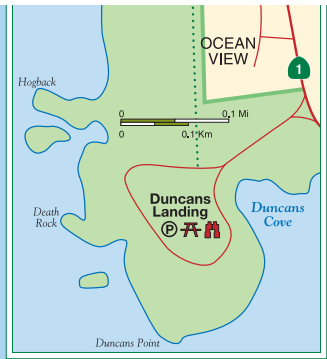
This park receives support in part from a nonprofit organization. For more information contact:  
 Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods  
 P. O. Box 2 • Duncans Mills, CA 95430  
 (707) 869-9177  
[www.stewardsofthecoastandredwoods.org](http://www.stewardsofthecoastandredwoods.org)

**TRAIL MILEAGE**

Goat Rock to Shell Beach	2.5 miles
Shell Beach to Wright's Beach	1.25 miles
Shell Beach - Pomo Canyon Trail	3.5 miles
Red Hill Trail Loop	1.25 miles

- Legend**
- Major Road
  - Paved Road
  - Trail
  - Paved Trail
  - Accessible Feature
  - Boat Launch
  - Campfire Center
  - Campground
  - Campsites
  - Environmental Camp
  - Hike/Bike Campground
  - Horse Trail
  - Locked Gate
  - Marina
  - No Drinking Water
  - Parking
  - Picnic Area
  - Ranger Station
  - Restrooms
  - RV Sanitation Station
  - Showers
  - Telephone
  - Viewpoint





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