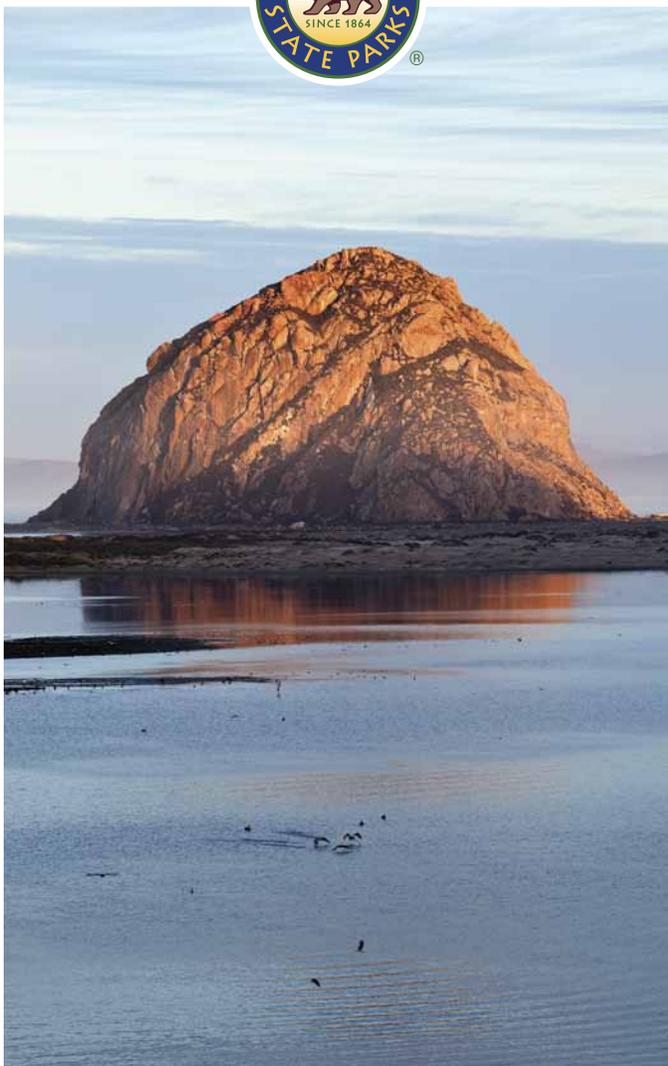


Morro Bay State Park



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.



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www.parks.ca.gov

Discover the many states of California.™

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 roosting Monarchs from November into February.

The climate is mild in winter and cool in summer—but often foggy and overcast.

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

The first American to settle in the area was Franklin Riley, who laid out streets and lots for a town he called “Morro” (meaning nose or headland). Year-round mild weather made Morro Bay 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.

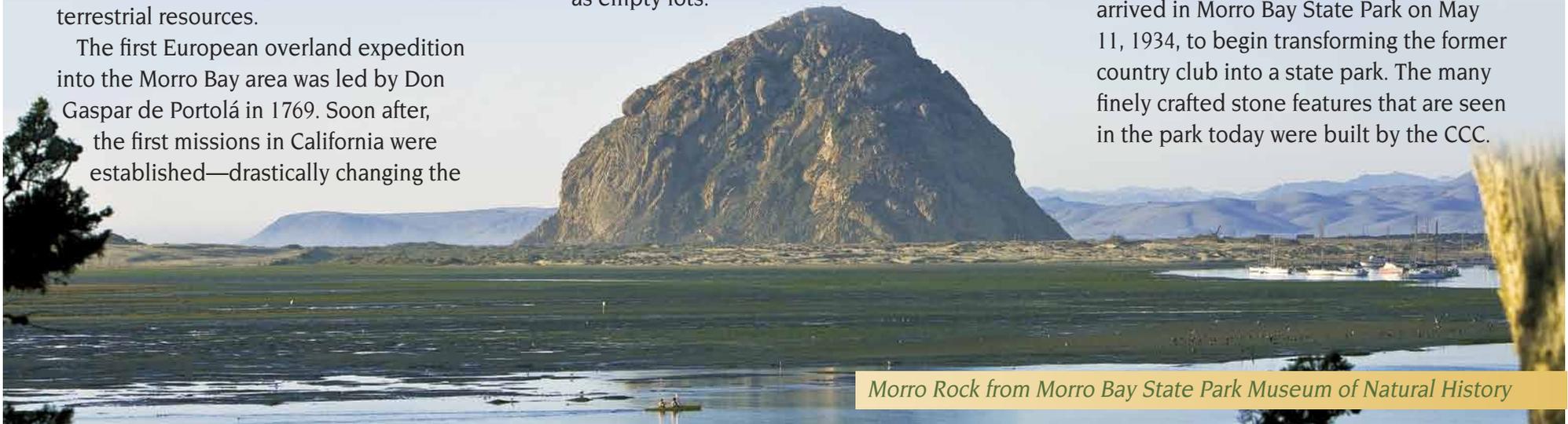


CCC-built “comfort station,” ca. 1934

The Cabrillo Country Club had opened on the present state park site a few months before the crash. The club's developers desperately sought a buyer, and the town 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 in Morro Bay State Park on May 11, 1934, to begin transforming the former country club into a state park. The many finely crafted stone features that are seen in the park today were built by the CCC.



Morro Rock from Morro Bay State Park Museum of Natural History



From left to right: Mural at entrance to Museum of Natural History, 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 roosting and feeding grounds for more than 100 species of migratory birds. When the lakes and feeding grounds in the north freeze over, birds flock here by the tens of thousands.

Heron Rookery Natural Preserve

The point north of the Museum of Natural History supports eucalyptus and cypress trees, where double-crested cormorants, great egrets and great blue herons roost.

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, some of the richest and most productive water habitats, provide 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—provide upland environs 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 relatively safe and well situated for their frequent feeding forays.

People are prohibited from climbing the rock for their own safety, and for the protection of the peregrine falcons and other wildlife.



Peregrine falcon

Museum of Natural History

The museum, on White Point, has a spectacular view of the bay. Completely renovated in 2002, the museum's interactive exhibits show how natural forces—including humans—affect Earth's environment and all life.

Several natural and cultural interpretive programs are offered by the museum staff—including exhibits, hikes, talks and special events. 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 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.

The Department of Fish and Game, California State Parks and the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary work with local communities to provide a balance between wildlife protection and human recreational activities.

Specific regulations apply for each of the designated classifications. In the Morro Bay area, there are two designated classifications—The Morro Bay State Marine Recreational Management Area (SMRMA) and the Morro Bay State Marine Reserve (SMR).

The Morro Bay SMRMA permits some limited recreational fishing and hunting. The Morro Bay SMR has the most protected classification, where all living marine resources are protected and must remain undisturbed.

To learn more and be a part of this important mission to protect and conserve California's unique marine habitat, please visit: www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

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

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



The Marina

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



Overview of Morro Estuary Natural Preserve from Black Hill



Morro Bay State Park Golf Course



Mountain biking in the Black Hill area

Camping—A mixed forest originally planted by Civilian Conservation Corps crews during the 1930s shades 135 campsites. For camping information and reservations, call (800) 444-7275 or visit www.parks.ca.gov.

Picnicking—Picnic facilities, including tables and barbecue pits, are available in the campground for those who wish to visit the park just for the day.

Trails—Hiking on the park's many trails is a favorite pastime. Mountain bikes are welcome on many of these trails. The Cerro Cabrillo area has trails that take hikers along chaparral- and grass-covered hillsides, with a beautiful view of the estuary and mud flats.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

- Museum of Natural History: parking lot, exhibits, unisex restroom, trailhead and .15-mile of the paved loop trail
- Picnic sites and campfire center

- Unisex restrooms at the campground and marina
- Accessibility is continually improving. For accessibility updates, call (916) 445-8949 or visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

PLEASE REMEMBER

- 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. Sounds from electronic equipment must not be audible beyond your site. 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) during the day and enclosed in a tent or vehicle at night. Dogs are not permitted on trails or beaches, except for service animals.

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 or (805) 528-0513
- **Los Osos Oaks State Natural Reserve**
Los Osos Valley Road, Los Osos 93402
(805) 772-7434

This park receives support in part through a nonprofit organization.

For more information contact:
Central Coast Natural History Association
20 State Park Road
Morro Bay, CA 93442
(805) 772-2694, Ext. 101

www.ccnha.org

