



Fact Sheet

California State Parks: 150th Anniversary Fact Sheet

- June 30, 1864 - President Abraham Lincoln signed a bill granting Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees to the State of California 'upon the express condition that the premises shall be held for public use, resort, and recreation, and shall be inalienable for all time.'
- September 28, 1864 - California Governor Frederick Low issued an interim proclamation of the State's approval of the Federal grant of Yosemite and the Mariposa Grove and appointed a commission to manage the area.
- 1865 - Yosemite Commissioner Frederick Law Olmsted produced a report on Management of Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Big Tree Grove.
- April 2, 1866 - The California Legislature passed and the Governor signed legislation to formally accept the Grant of Yosemite and the Mariposa Grove. The legislation also established the Commissioners to Manage the Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Big Tree Grove', the first laws to protect this park area and the authority to hire a guardian (Ranger) to management the new park.
- May 21, 1866 - At the first meeting of the California State 'Commissioners to Manage the Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Big Tree Grove', Galen Clark (one of the Commissioners) was appointed Guardian of Yosemite at \$500 per year. Not recognized until much later, Clark had become California's and the nation's first Park Ranger.
- 1890 - The Marshall Monument was established as the first historical state park and in 1891 Ezra Smith was appointed guardian (Ranger) of the monument.
- 1902 - The California Redwood Park at Big Basin was established and in 1903 the first park warden J.H.B. Pilkington was appointed.
- 1928 - Seventeen (17) parks and 15 full-time employees incorporated into the newly established Division of Parks.
- Today - Since establishing of these first parks, California State Parks has grown to be the largest state park system in the United States with 280 park units and almost 70 million visitors annually.

California State Parks Mission

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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About California State Parks

California Department of Parks and Recreation manages 280 park units, which contain the finest and most diverse collection of natural, cultural, and recreational resources to be found within California. These treasures are as diverse as California: From the last stands of primeval redwood forests to vast expanses of fragile desert; from the lofty Sierra Nevada to the broad sandy beaches of our southern coast; and from the opulence of Hearst Castle to the vestiges of colonial Russia.

California State Parks contains the largest and most diverse natural and cultural heritage holdings of any state agency in the nation. State park units include underwater preserves, reserves, and parks; redwood, rhododendron, and wildlife reserves; state beaches, recreation areas, wilderness areas, and reservoirs; state historic parks, historic homes, Spanish era adobe buildings, including museums, visitor centers, cultural reserves, and preserves; as well as lighthouses, ghost towns, waterslides, conference centers, and off-highway vehicle parks. These parks protect and preserve an unparalleled collection of culturally and environmentally sensitive structures and habitats, threatened plant and animal species, ancient Native American sites, historic structures and artifacts . . . the best of California's natural and cultural history.

Responsible for almost one-third of California's scenic coastline, California State Parks manages the state's finest coastal wetlands, estuaries, beaches, and dune systems. Our workplace consists of nearly 1.4 million acres, with over 280 miles of coastline; 625 miles of lake and river frontage; nearly 15,000 campsites; and 3,000 miles of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails.

Fun Facts About California State Parks

Best Place to View California's State Flower -- The California Poppy

[Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve](#)

Best Place to View California's Native Tule Elk

[Tule Elk State Reserve](#)

Best Place To Watch Gulls in the State

[Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve](#). Huge gull population nests here in spring--85% of the gull population.

Best View of the World in the United States

[Mount Diablo State Park](#). The summit - 3,849' - offers a sweeping panorama--more of the earth's surface can be seen from the mountain than any other peak in the world, except Mt. Kilimanjaro in Africa.

California's First and Last American Consul's Home

[Monterey State Historic Park](#). Home of Thomas O. Larkin, posted in 1844.

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California's Only Town Founded, Financed and Governed by African American
[Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park](#) founded in 1908.

Coldest Place in California State Parks

[Mount San Jacinto State Park](#) - Lowest recorded temperature-12° below zero 1972-73

Hottest Places in California State Parks

[Anza-Borrego Desert State Park](#) - Summer temperatures in the range of 120°

[Salton Sea State Recreation Area](#) - Summer temperatures in the range of 120°

Driest California State Park

[Anza-Borrego Desert State Park](#). Some areas average 2" a year.

Wettest California State Park

[Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Park](#) - 92.77" average rainfall

[Sinkyone Wilderness State Park](#) - Unofficial 100" rainfall a year

Highest Point in California State Parks

[Mount San Jacinto State Park](#) - The view from the top --10, 804 feet--takes in most of Southern California; highest point in State Park System, second highest peak in Southern California.

Lowest Point in California State Parks

[Salton Sea State Recreation Area](#) - 230 feet below sea level

Largest California State Park

[Anza-Borrego Desert State Park](#) - 600,000 acres--the largest state park in California

Smallest California State Park

[Watts Towers of Simon Rodia State Historic Park](#) .11 acres

Largest Collection of European Antiquities in California State Parks

[Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument](#)

Largest Continental Rift

[Salton Sea State Recreation Area](#) - Salton Trough: Largest continental rift on the North American Continent



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Largest Lake in California

[Salton Sea State Recreation Area](#)

Largest Natural Lake in California

[Clear Lake State Park](#)

Largest Number of Grinding Rock Mortars

[Indian Grinding Rock State Historic Park](#) - Chaw'se 1,185 mortars in one rock formation

Largest Off-Stream Reservoir Anywhere in the World

[San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area](#) - 2,041,000-acre feet capacity

Largest Amount of Sand Dunes in California State Parks

[MacKerricher State Park](#) - Ten Mile Dunes

[Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area](#)

Oldest California State Park

[Big Basin Redwoods State Park](#) - 1902--founded as California Redwood Park

Oldest Continuously Used Chinese Temple in California

[Weaverville Joss House State Historic Park](#) - The Joss House was built in 1874 on site of earlier temple.

Oldest Structures in California State Parks

[El Presidio de Santa Barbara State Historic Park](#) Cañedo Adobe, 1782--part of Spanish Presidio; El Cuartel, 1788--only remaining intact building of the Santa Barbara Presidio.

Plants or Animals Native only to California State Parks

[Caswell Memorial State Park](#) - Riparian Brush Rabbit *Sylvilagus bachmani riparius*

[Mount Diablo State Park](#) - Mt. Diablo bird's-beak *Cordylanthus nidularius*

Tallest Tree in the World

[Humboldt Redwoods State Park](#) - *Sequoia sempervirens* 368'-369' tall in the Rockefeller Forest

Tallest Waterfall in California State Parks

[McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial SP](#) - Burney Falls--129'

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Widest Diameter Tree in California State Parks

[Calaveras Big Trees State Park](#) - Louis Agassiz Tree, South Grove--24' wide

Wilderness within a City Limit

[Topanga State Park](#)

The Farthest North State Park

[Pelican State Beach](#), near the Oregon Border

The Farthest South State Park

[Border Field State Park](#), near the Mexican border