

## Introduction

**M**ANY OF CALIFORNIA'S most alluring coastal attractions are described in this guidebook. Point Reyes National Seashore, San Francisco's waterfront, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, Monterey Bay Aquarium, and Point Lobos: these and many more are found within these pages. Along with numerous deservedly popular destinations are sites that are less well known, if equally enticing. Even travelers on California's coastal highway could easily miss some strikingly beautiful beaches located mere steps away, yet out of sight. In all, some 350 shoreline destinations are thoroughly described here, including every known publicly accessible beach along the coast of Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, and Monterey Counties. Here too are wildlife reserves, marinas, aquariums, public parks, and other attractions.

From San Francisco Bay to Monterey Bay and beyond, California's coast bears traces of the region's colorful history. The days of Spanish settlement, Mexican ranchos, and gold rush-era immigration are reflected in historic settlements, many of them still flourishing, while others have vanished. Some of California's earliest shoreline resorts were born along this stretch of the state's central coast. Natural treasures of the coast, including geologic formations, wildflowers, tidepools, and spacious beaches, are everywhere and are thoroughly described in this book.

The California Coastal Commission, along with the State Coastal Conservancy, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Department of Fish and Game, is charged with conserving, enhancing, and making available to the public the beaches, accessways, and resources of the coast. The Coastal Commission's responsibilities under the law known as the California Coastal Act include providing the public with a guide to coastal resources and maintaining an inventory of paths, trails, and other shoreline accessways available to the public. This book furthers those purposes, as do the first three books in the California Coastal Commission's guidebook series: *Experience the California Coast*, *A Guide to Beaches and Parks in Northern California*; *Beaches and Parks from Monterey to Ventura*; and *Beaches and Parks in Southern California*, as well as the previously published *California Coastal Resource Guide* and *California Coastal Access Guide*.

The state of California owns all tidelands, submerged lands, and the beds of inland navigable waters, holding them for "public trust" uses that include fishing, navigation, commerce, nature preserves, swimming, boating, and walking. Tidelands consist of the area on a beach or rocky coastline that is between the mean high tide line and the mean low tide line. The California Constitution guarantees the public's right of access to tidelands. The state of California (or other managing agency), however, may place restrictions on the time, place, and manner of use of tidelands.

Private property exists along the California coast in many locations, inland of the tidelands. The public generally does not have a right to cross private property without permission to get to tidelands, although easements and other legal provisions allow public use of some private shoreline properties; see entries that follow for more information.

The California Coastal Commission, the State Coastal Conservancy, local governments, and nonprofit land trusts in the five-county region addressed by this book continue to press for increased opportunities for legal, safe access to the beach. This guidebook tells you what coastal resources are at each location and what you might do there. The book is meant to encourage all coastal visitors, whether equipped with beach blanket, binoculars, or bodyboard, to explore the richness and diversity of the California coast.

Dogs enjoy an outing to the coast, but their inquisitive nature can create hazards for coastal wildlife. In state parks, dogs must be kept on leashes that are no more than six feet long and in a tent or enclosed vehicle at night. Except for guide dogs, pets are not allowed in state park buildings, on trails, or on most beaches. Although allowed in some city and county beach parks, dogs may be subject to leash requirements. Please observe posted signs regarding dogs on trails and beaches and in parks. For more information on beaches described in this guide that allow dogs either on- or off-leash, check the index for “dog-friendly beaches.” Glass containers and alcoholic beverages are prohibited on most urban beaches, and some communities prohibit smoking on the beach; check individual entries for more information.

Numerous commercial outfitters sell or rent surfboards, kayaks, bicycles, and other recreational gear; some are listed here, as space allows. Check local yellow pages or Internet search services for more. The editors welcome suggestions for future editions (see p. 300).

For an economical overnight stay, this guide lists hostels, publicly owned campgrounds, and, as space permits, private campground facilities. Campsites in public or private parks include family camps, group camps, sites with RV hookups, walk-in environmental campsites, hike or bike sites, and enroute (overflow) spaces. Many can be reserved in advance. Visitors are encouraged to check with clearinghouses such as the local visitor bureaus for additional campground listings; for more information, see the introduction for each county.

Information about market-rate hotels, inns, eating establishments, and other visitor destinations is available from numerous guidebooks and websites.

Enjoy your visits to California’s spectacular coast. Keep safe by observing posted restrictions along hazardous stretches of shoreline. Remember that sleeper waves are a factor on the California coast. When strolling the beach or checking out tidepools, make it a general rule not to turn your back on the ocean. Remember that large waves may wash over what look like safe spots on rocks and bluffs. When possible, swim near a lifeguard. Lifeguards patrol many parts of the central California coast year-round, although lifeguard towers on the sand are very limited and are generally staffed daily only during the summer.

Natural conditions along the California coast are always changing, and the width of beaches and shape of bluffs can be altered by the seasonal movement of sand or by erosion. Coastal access and recreation facilities can be damaged by these forces, and trails, stairways, parking areas, and other facilities may be out of service or may be closed due to budget constraints. When planning any trip to the coast, check ahead of time to

For general information on state parks, including a list of camping and day-use fees and campgrounds available without a reservation, see: [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov).

For state park camping reservations, call: 1-800-445-7275 (available 24 hours), or see: [www.reserveamerica.com](http://www.reserveamerica.com).

For other camping opportunities, see individual entries that follow.

For information on Hostelling International’s facilities, see: [www.hiusa.org](http://www.hiusa.org).

make sure that your destination is currently accessible. Some facilities, such as park visitor centers, are run by volunteers and are open only limited hours; call ahead to check open times. Facilities such as running water are limited or not available at some parks and shoreline accessways; it is a good idea on a coastal trip to bring water, food, layered clothing, and sunscreen. Bring change for parking meters. There is room here for only limited information about public transit lines that serve beaches; check with local transit providers for details.

This guide's purpose is to contribute to a better understanding of the importance of coastal resources, both to the quality of life for people and to the maintenance of a healthy and productive natural environment. This book is offered with the knowledge that a wide appreciation for the coast among Californians plays an important role in the protection and restoration of coastal resources.



Seal Rock Overlook, San Francisco

## Using This Guide

Each group of sites is accompanied by a map and a chart of key facilities and characteristics. The “Facilities for Disabled” chart category includes wheelchair-accessible restrooms, trails, campsites, or visitor centers; text descriptions note where restrooms are *not* wheelchair accessible. The “Fee” category refers to a charge for entry, parking, or camping. Check the index for surfing spots, beaches with lifeguard service, and other recreational highlights. Most parks and recreational outfitters maintain websites, but URL addresses may

change and space here is limited; use any popular Internet search engine to look for more information on facilities listed in this guide.

Brief introductions to coastal environments such as beaches, rocky shore, and the vast Monterey Submarine Canyon are included, along with highlights of plants, animals, and other resources that you may see there. For more information about the California coast, consult the Bibliography and Suggestions for Further Reading found on p. 308.

Sandy Beach  
 Rocky Shore  
 Trail  
 Visitor Center  
 Campground  
 Wildlife Viewing  
 Fishing or Boating  
 Facilities for Disabled  
 Food and Drink  
 Restrooms  
 Parking  
 Fee



Natural Bridges State Beach, Santa Cruz County

## Caring for the Coast

**C**AN YOU IMAGINE California without the coast? Our state is in many ways defined by its coastline, which provides us with endless enjoyment, beauty, solace, and adventure. It is easy to take this for granted. But what have you done for the coast lately? You can contribute to its good health by developing an awareness of how it is affected by your everyday actions, and striving to act in ways that will have beneficial results. Here are some tips. For more ideas and to take the Coastal Stewardship Pledge, visit [www.coastforyou.org](http://www.coastforyou.org) or call 1-800-COAST-4U.

### Stash Your Trash

Each year, thousands of marine animals die after becoming entangled in or ingesting debris. Plastic is particularly harmful because it does not biodegrade. When exposed to the elements, plastic breaks up into smaller and smaller pieces, but these particles persist. Researchers have found alarming quantities of small plastic pieces in the open ocean, where they circulate continuously unless and until consumed by a bird, fish, or marine mammal.

Most of this debris comes from land and was carried to the ocean by rain, tides, or wind. Avoid contributing to this problem by always disposing of trash properly and by practicing the three “Rs”—**reduce** the waste you generate, buy **reusable** items, and **recycle** trash when possible. When going to the beach or out on a boat, bring a bag and pick up the debris you come across. Each piece you collect is one less hazard for a marine animal. Another way to help is to volunteer for a beach cleanup activity, such as Coastal Cleanup Day or the Adopt-A-Beach Program.



Volunteers on an excursion from Fresno participating in a beach cleanup at Monterey Beach

## Coastal Wetlands

In California, population growth and associated coastal development have destroyed or degraded most of our coastal wetlands. Those that remain provide critical wildlife habitat and are a tremendous public resource. Wetlands can serve as a refuge for wildlife and for human visitors, too—a place to go for a respite from urban life, where you can experience nature. This book describes many of these wetlands and the recreational opportunities available there. Take care when visiting wetlands; they are susceptible to damage if vegetation is disturbed by foot traffic, and sensitive wildlife species are vulnerable to disturbance by humans, dogs, and horses. When visiting wetlands, stay on prescribed pathways and boardwalks, and pay close attention to rules imposed by land managers. Where dogs are allowed, keep them leashed.

## Tidepool Etiquette

Tidepools offer the opportunity to see fascinating marine creatures at close range. However, given the sensitivity of tidepool plants and animals to human contact, there is a real danger of these remarkable ecosystems being quite literally loved to death. It is critical that all visitors learn proper “tidepool etiquette.” Please follow these rules when visiting tidepools, and help to educate other visitors as well.

- Watch where you step. Step only on bare rock or sand.
- Don't touch any living organisms. A coating of slime protects most tidepool animals, and touching the animals can damage them.
- Don't prod or poke tidepool animals with a stick. Don't attempt to pry animals off of rocks.
- Leave everything as you found it. Collecting tidepool organisms is illegal in most locations and will kill them. Cutting eelgrass, surfgrass, and sea palm is prohibited.



Tidepools exposed at low tide at James V. Fitzgerald Marine Reserve

## Marine Protected Areas

California's designated marine protected areas include "no-take" marine reserves, where all marine life is protected, as well as marine conservation areas and marine parks, where the catch of certain species with specified types of fishing gear is allowed. For maps and regulations, which are different for each site; see: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa/>. Or, contact the California Department of Fish and Game by e-mail at: [AskMarine@dfg.ca.gov](mailto:AskMarine@dfg.ca.gov) or call: 831-649-2870.

## Watching Wildlife

Observing wild animals in their natural environment is a rare treat. To ensure that the encounter results in no harm to either the animal or the human observer, keep your distance and watch quietly. Stay clear of mothers with young, and never surround an animal, or trap an animal between a vessel and shore. Leave pets at home, or keep them on a leash and away from wildlife. Never feed wild animals. If a marine mammal appears sick or a pup appears to be abandoned, resist the temptation to "save" it. Instead, seek help from a professional. Contact the Marine Mammal Center: 415-289-SEAL.

## Sensible Seafood Choices

Increasing consumer demand for seafood has led to overfishing. Some fishing practices destroy habitat and harm non-target fish and animals. Use your purchasing power to support healthy oceans by selecting seafood that is harvested in a sustainable and environmentally responsible manner. For a pocket guide to sensible seafood choices, visit [www.montereybayaquarium.org/cr/seafoodwatch.asp](http://www.montereybayaquarium.org/cr/seafoodwatch.asp).

## Non-point Source Pollution

Another way that people affect the health of the coast is through non-point source pollution, which gets flushed into the ocean by stormwater runoff. Minimize your contribution to this problem by taking simple actions; for example, use least-toxic gardening products, maintain your car to prevent oil leaks, and pick up after your dog.

## Whale Tail License Plate

California drivers can help the coast by purchasing a Whale Tail License Plate. The plate funds coastal access trails, beach cleanups, habitat restoration projects, and coastal and marine education programs throughout California, including grants to local groups. The Whale Tail License Plate got a fresh new look in 2011. The new Whale Tail Plate was designed by California artists Elizabeth Tyndall and Bill Atkins.

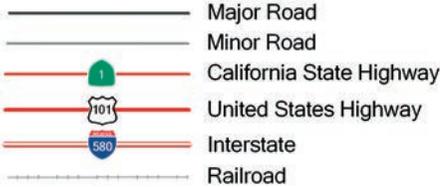
For information, call: 1-800-COAST-4U, or visit [www.ecoplates.com](http://www.ecoplates.com).



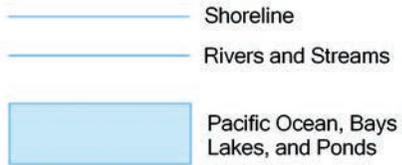
New whale tail plate design

## Map Legend

### TRANSPORTATION



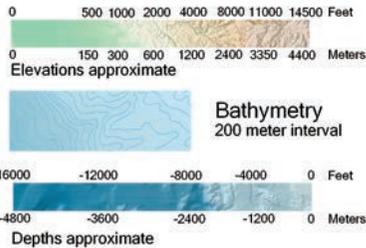
### SHORELINE AND HYDROGRAPHY



### TRAILS AND BIKE WAYS



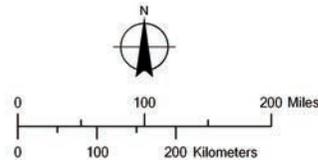
### TOPOGRAPHY AND BATHYMETRY



### BOUNDARIES



### NORTH ARROW AND BAR SCALE



### MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Marine Protected Areas along the central California coast have been designated by the California Department of Fish and Game. For maps and information about fishing restrictions, see: [www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa) or call: 831-649-2870.

### DATA AND INFORMATION SOURCES

California Coastal Commission  
 California Department of Fish and Game  
 California Spatial Information Library  
 U.S. Geological Survey

Protected open space data is from the California Protected Area Database (CPAD) provided by GreenInfo Network, 2009