


Introduction

N CALIFORNIA'S Central Coast you will find some of the world's most spectacular coastal sights. Beaches and coastal parks in Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties include many of the state's most popular, with facilities ranging from the plain and simple to Hearst Castle, a mansion of unparalleled excess. The Central Coast's lesser known beaches and recreation areas are also described in this guide, offering to every visitor a favorite spot on the shore.

This book is intended to depict the richness and diversity of the California coast. It is meant for all coastal visitors, whether equipped with beach blanket, binoculars, or bodyboard. The book tells you where to find over 300 beaches, parks, and other recreational facilities along the Central Coast, what coastal resources are at each location, and what you might do there. Most of the sites listed here are publicly owned, while others are privately managed.

Point Conception, located in Santa Barbara County, is the intersection of northern and southern California. North of Point Conception, powerful breakers pound the rocky shore, and tidepools invite exploration. Beaches of crystalline whiteness, and of dark-hued pebbles strewn with moonstones, are scattered along the coast. The pine and cypress trees of Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties have come to evoke for many visitors the shoreline of this part of California.

South of Point Conception are chaparral-covered slopes and warm, sandy beaches. Sheltered ocean waters and the rays of the sun bring to mind sailboats and sand castles. World-famous surf breaks punctuate the shore. Palm trees, although non-native, make themselves right at home. Water sports are highly popular at Santa Barbara and Ventura County beaches, where average ocean water temperatures in summer approach 70 degrees Fahrenheit.

All along the four counties described in this book, air temperatures are generally mild. In the north, average high temperatures range from near 60 degrees Fahrenheit in winter to the low 70s in summer; in the south, average highs range from the mid 60s in winter to the high 70s in summer. Coastal overcast sometimes moderates high temperatures in spring or summer; the autumn months are often the warmest. And although the seasons are indeed distinguishable on this Mediterranean-type coast, with its rainless summers and cool, sometimes wet winters, a warm sun and cloudless sky could frame your coastal visit on just about any date in the calendar.

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 does the first book in the California Coastal Commission's new guidebook series, *Experience the California Coast: A Guide to Beaches and Parks in Northern California*, and the previously published *California Coastal Resource Guide* and *California Coastal Access Guide*.

This guide does not encourage trespass on private property. Not included here are a few commonly used trails over which the public lacks a legal right of access. Informal beach paths that cross the right-of-way of the Union Pacific Railroad, as in a

few locations in Santa Barbara County, may involve trespass if they lack public use easements. The California Coastal Commission, the State Coastal Conservancy, and local governments in the four-county region addressed by this book continue to press for increased opportunities for legal, safe access to the beach. We have attempted to include all known public beaches and accessways; as additional shoreline accessways become available, they will be included in future editions of the California Coastal Commission's guides.

This book lists, for smaller communities, commercial outfitters that sell or rent kayaks, surfing equipment, bicycles, and other gear. In the more populous areas, these facilities are too numerous to include in this book; check local yellow pages or Internet search services to find what you need. The information here is as complete as space allows; call ahead to make sure the recreational offerings you seek are available. The editors welcome suggestions for future editions (see p. 300).

For an economical overnight stay, this guide lists hostels, state and local 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. Where private campgrounds are too numerous to be listed individually, visitors are directed to clearinghouses such as the local chambers of commerce; see the introduction for each county.

In addition to having one of the most striking shorelines found anywhere in the world, the coast of Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties holds distinctive coastal villages and urban attractions that equal those of metropolitan areas far larger in size. Information about market-rate hotels, inns, eating establishments, and other visitor destinations is available in numerous other guidebooks.

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.

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 closed for repairs. When planning any trip to the coast, check ahead of time to make sure that your destination is currently accessible. Some facilities, such as park visitor centers, are run by volun-

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.

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

For other camping opportunities, see individual entries that follow.

For information on Hostelling International's facilities, see www.hiayh.org.

teers 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, waterless hand cleaner, and an extra layer of clothing. Key information is included here about public transit lines that serve beaches in the larger communities described in this book; check with local transit providers for details.

Dogs also enjoy coastal outings, 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. See individual site descriptions, and please observe posted signs regarding dogs on trails and beaches and in parks.

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.



Playing in the surf

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 in the book 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 dunes, rocky shore, and Monterey pine forest 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 (p. 308).

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



Sand play

Caring for the Coast

THIS BOOK helps you get the most out of visiting California's Central Coast, which offers endless enjoyment, beauty, solace, and adventure. 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 by 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 or call 1-800-COAST-4U.

Stash Your Trash

Researchers have found alarming quantities of plastic debris in the open ocean, where it circulates continuously unless and until it is 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.

Watch Your Step!

Certain types of coastal habitats and the wildlife that live there are especially sensitive to human encounters. To minimize your disturbance to these ecologically important places, please observe the guidelines that follow.



Volunteers participating in a beach cleanup