

# Camping

*in California State Parks*

BROUGHT TO YOU BY  
CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS FOUNDATION



**CALIFORNIA  
STATE PARKS  
FOUNDATION**

## **ABOUT CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS FOUNDATION**

California State Parks Foundation is an independent, member-supported nonprofit dedicated to protecting and preserving the California state park system, for the benefit of all.

For over 50 years, California State Parks Foundation has been the leading statewide voice in advocating for parks and people, protecting the best of California for future generations.

We foster park-centered communities in collaboration with diverse partners across California, engaging with state parks staff at all levels, collaborating with the Legislature to prioritize state parks in budgets and legislation, and inspiring Californians to experience, care for, and champion their parks.

Visit our website to learn more: [calparks.org](https://calparks.org)



## CAMPING IN CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

California’s state park system is loved by many within and outside the state of California. From breathtaking waterfall views to tranquil forest hideaways, California’s beloved state park system boasts over 14,000 campsites. These public spaces bring families and friends together and provide a wide array of recreational opportunities for the benefit and enjoyment of all people. Whether you prefer to sleep under the stars, get cozy in a cabin, or spend the night in a yurt, there’s a state park campsite for everyone.



13,386 individual campsites



271 group campsites



734 facilities such as cabins, yurts, lodges, etc.



5.9 million campers

SOURCE: CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS  
STATISTICAL REPORT 2022/23 FISCAL YEAR

### HOW TO RESERVE A CALIFORNIA STATE PARK CAMPSITE

You can make reservations online or by calling the Customer Call Center. To reserve online, visit [ReserveCalifornia.com](https://ReserveCalifornia.com) or navigate there from an individual park webpage. To reserve by phone, call 800-444-7275. The Customer Call Center is available seven days a week from 8 AM until 6 PM (except some holidays).

Walk up camping is available at some state parks. Individual parks do not take reservations; reservations must be made through [ReserveCalifornia.com](https://ReserveCalifornia.com).

### WHEN YOU CAN RESERVE A CAMPSITE

You can reserve campsites and lodging **six months in advance from the current date**. For example, if you are booking on May 1 (open at 8 AM PST), you can make a reservation with an arrival date of November 1. Bookings may extend from the arrival date to the desired departure date, based on availability and the park’s maximum stay rules.

Please note that a reservation drawing may be required for more popular sites.

The following pages offer some spectacular campgrounds throughout the state of California that you can choose from. A map of all the parks listed is available on [page 3](#). Remember: it’s a good idea to have alternate parks in mind in case your first choice is booked. Also, please check each park website before booking in case there are any changes or closures.

**Please note:** [ReserveCalifornia.com](https://ReserveCalifornia.com) is managed by the California Department of Parks and Recreation. If you are having any issues, call their Customer Call Center at 800-444-7275.

# WHERE TO CAMP IN CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

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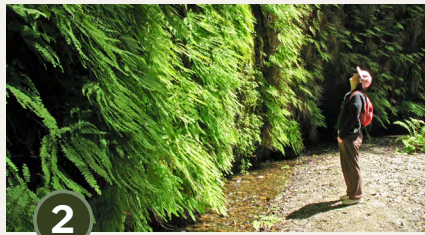
# IDEAS ON WHERE TO CAMP IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA



1

## Humboldt Redwoods State Park

The South Fork of the Eel River provides excellent opportunities for fishing, boating, picnicking, and swimming. More than 100 miles of trails await hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians, who can spend the night in one of more than 250 campsites or four group camp sites.



2

## Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park

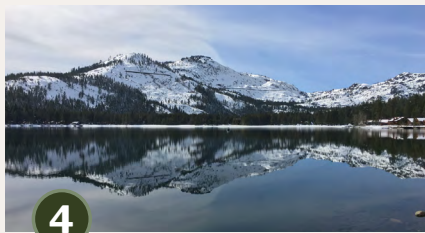
Hike in an old-growth forest so wild and lush that it was used as a backdrop for the movie *Jurassic Park*. Elk Prairie Campground has 75 family sites and hike/bike sites. Gold Bluffs Beach Campground has 26 tent or RV sites and 3 non-reservable environmental sites. No hookups or sanitation stations are available.



3

## MacKerricher State Park

Just north of Fort Bragg, MacKerricher has great coastal camping and lots of nearby attractions. More than 140 campsites accommodate tents and recreational vehicles. Family campsites have restrooms nearby, tables, food storage lockers, and fire rings. Two group tent-only sites can accommodate up to 40 and 60 campers.



4

## Donner Memorial State Park

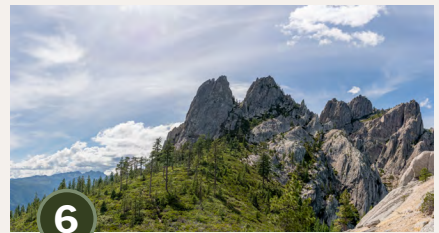
Located near Lake Tahoe, you'll be camping just 20 miles away from one of the most beautiful lakes in California. Enjoy water sports and learn about the history of the ill-fated Donner Party. The park is open from Memorial Day to mid-October, weather permitting. Campsites have tables and fire grates; restrooms and hot showers are nearby. There are no hookups.



5

## Plumas-Eureka State Park

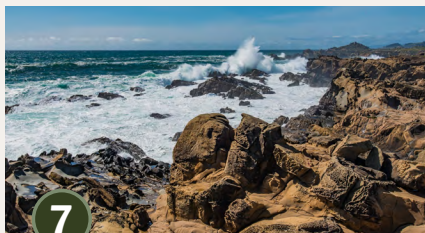
High on the glacier-scored peaks of the Sierra Nevada, the rugged park sits at the foot of the granite formation once called "Gold Mountain." Jamison Creek has 67 campsites with picnic tables, fire rings, and bearproof food lockers. Drinking water, restrooms, and hot showers are nearby. Sites accommodate trailers up to 24 feet and motorhomes up to 28 feet.



6

## Castle Crag State Park

Majestic Castle Crag has inspired enduring myths and legends. The park offers a variety of camping, picnicking, hiking, and fishing opportunities. The park has 76 developed campsites that are each equipped with a picnic table, food locker, and a fire ring – perfect for roasting marshmallows. Flush toilets, showers, and drinking water are available near each campsite.



7

## Salt Point State Park

The coastal park offers rocky bluffs, panoramic views, kelp-dotted coves, and the dramatic sounds of pounding surf, along with open grasslands, forested hills, pristine prairies, and pygmy forest. There are over 100 campsites in the park. All campsites, with the exception of overflow camping, are equipped with a fire ring, picnic table, and food locker. The campgrounds have drinking water and restrooms but no showers. A dump station is not available.



8

## D. L. Bliss State Park

The park has more than 150 family campsites, each with a table, food locker, and stove, plus nearby restrooms and hot showers. The max trailer length is 15 feet and max motorhome length is 18 feet. Campsites are cozy at this historic campground, and the narrow roads and small park pads remind us of simpler times. This campground does not have hookups. However, there are showers and a dump station available for registered campers.



9

## Clear Lake State Park

This park has four campgrounds: Cole Creek, Kelsey Creek, Lower Bayview, and Upper Bayview. Kelsey Creek campground is open year-round. All of the sites can fit a maximum camper/trailer length of 35 feet. There are no electrical or water hookups. Eight cabins are also available for reservations – of which two are ADA accessible – located just feet from the beautiful Clear Lake.

# IDEAS ON WHERE TO CAMP IN CENTRAL CALIFORNIA

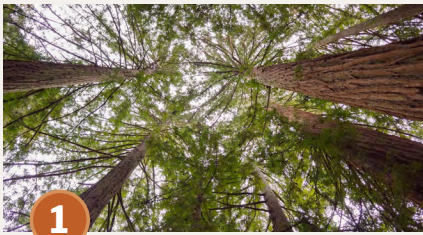
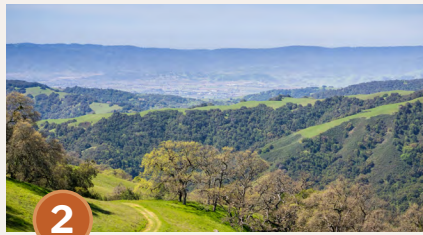


PHOTO: T. COWART VIA FLICKR

1

## Samuel P. Taylor State Park

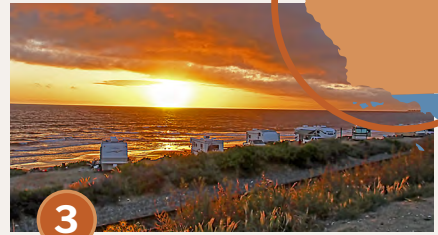
Most of the park's campsites can be found in the shade of majestic redwoods, with a few (at Devil's Gulch and Madrone) under oaks and bay laurel at the bottom of Barnabe Peak. The main campground has about 60 single-family campsites with restrooms, hot showers, and piped drinking water. Newly built cabins are also available.



2

## Henry W. Coe State Park

Headquarters Campground is near the top of Pine Ridge and the visitor center. Some sites have panoramic views; others are beneath shady oaks. Each site has a picnic table and a fire ring. Sites not located beneath trees have shade ramadas. Considered primitive, the campground has piped spring water and nearby pit toilets, but no showers or hookups.



3

## Emma Wood State Beach

Popular for walking, fishing, swimming, and surfing, Emma Wood State Beach also offers primitive camping for fully self-contained vehicles only; tents are not permitted. No water, restrooms, electricity, fire rings, or dump stations are available. There are 90 campsites, which are not level and may contain a mixture of asphalt, dirt, cobble, and ocean debris.



4

## New Brighton State Beach

The forested bluffs offer a campground, hiking trails, and sweeping views of Monterey Bay, just steps from a sandy shore perfect for fishing, beach combing, and swimming. New Brighton State Beach is a popular 93-acre campground and beach on the Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary in the city of Capitola. There are over 100 developed campsites, 11 hookup sites, a visitor center/museum, and campfire center.



5

## Sonoma Coast State Park

Rugged rocky bluffs, scenic coastal coves, and tidepools with abundant marine life all attract visitors to Sonoma Coast State Park. Located only a few hours north of the San Francisco Bay Area, it offers the perfect escape from the summer heat for families or beginning campers. The park offers three campgrounds, with Bodega Dunes Campground offering the most amenities, including showers and dump stations.



6

## Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park

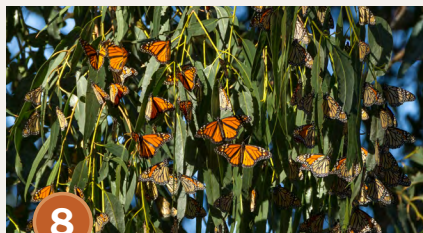
Allensworth is the only California town to be founded, financed, and governed by Black Americans. Fifteen campsites, open all year, accommodate RVs or tents. Each site at this historic gem includes a picnic table and a fire ring; flush toilets and showers are nearby. Facilities for people who are disabled are available. The campground also features turf, trees, and shade ramadas.



7

## Calaveras Big Trees State Park

North of Arnold off Highway 4, the colossal trees of Calaveras Big Trees State Park stand in quiet testimony to prehistoric times. The North Grove Campground has more than 70 sites; the Oak Hollow Campground has more than 50. Both can accommodate tents and RVs up to 30 feet. Campsites have fire rings and picnic tables; piped water, flush toilets, and pay showers are nearby. For a different experience, four rental cabins each have two bedrooms, a kitchen, living room, and private full bath.



8

## Pismo State Beach

Head to this beach for some bird watching and stay for the added treat of spotting the largest overwintering colony of monarch butterflies in the United States. Both campgrounds within Pismo State Beach provide conventional amenities such as restrooms, pay-operated hot showers, picnic tables, and campfire rings. North Beach Campground features tent camping facilities and a campfire center. Oceano Campground features both hookup RV sites and tent camping sites. However, there are showers and a dump station available.



9

## Red Rock Canyon State Park

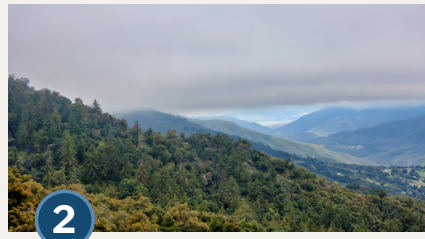
When you visit this park, you'll see scenic desert cliffs, buttes, and spectacular rock formations. Camping is only available in developed sites in Ricardo Campground. The campground is tucked up against the base of dramatic desert cliffs, with 50 primitive campsites, potable water, pit toilets, fire rings, and tables. There are no RV hookups or showers. Camping is first come, first served; there is no reservation system. The campground can fill up on weekends in the spring and fall, so arriving on a Thursday evening or Friday morning is recommended.

# IDEAS ON WHERE TO CAMP IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



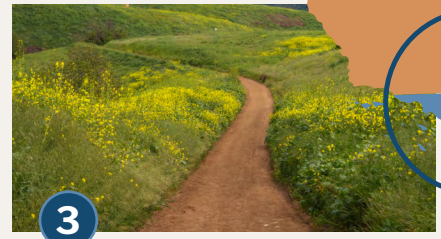
1

**Anza-Borrego Desert State Park**  
At more than 600,000 acres, this desert park is the biggest of them all! Many visitors come in the spring to delight in the wildflower bloom. Depending on yearly rainfall, you'll find vibrant marigolds, beavertail cacti, and lupine carpeting the desert floor. There are four developed campgrounds with 175 total sites and also 8 primitive campgrounds.



2

**Palomar Mountain State Park**  
Pristine forest, peaceful meadows, and pleasing panoramas of northern San Diego County are all in this park. Doane Valley Campground has 31 family campsites, each with a table, fire ring, barbecue, and food locker. Restrooms and piped drinking water are available nearby. Group camping is available at the Cedar Grove Group Campground.



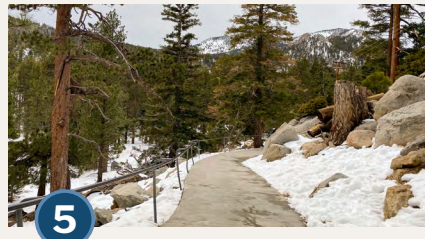
3

**Chino Hills State Park**  
Chino Hills State Park is a verdant place full of rolling, grassy hills and valleys. Located near Riverside, the park is a premier natural open-space area in the hills around the Santa Ana Canyon. The Rolling M Ranch Campground is available by reservation online or in person. The campground has 20 campsites, access to trails, potable water, and flush toilets. Campfires are not allowed, but there are BBQ grills at each site.



4

**Cuyamaca Rancho State Park**  
The park's 24,700 acres feature oak and conifer forests, expansive meadows, and peaceful creeks. Campsites with tables and fire rings are available, with accessible restrooms nearby. Trailers are limited to 30 feet long. Six rudimentary camping cabins with wooden bunks and nearby restrooms at Paso Picacho are available for year-round reservations. Paso Picacho Group Camp accommodates up to 40 campers with 20 cars or light trucks.



5

**Mount San Jacinto State Park**  
Experience granite peaks, sub-alpine forests, and mountain meadows south of the Sierra Nevada range at two developed campgrounds accessible from Highway 243. Idyllwild Campground offers amenities like full hookup and electric campsites, flush toilets, and coin-operated showers. The Stone Creek Campground about 5 miles north offers electric campsites (no full hookups), but it is a little more primitive as it only has vault toilets and no shower facilities.



6

**Picacho State Recreation Area**  
Picacho used to be a gold-mining town with only 100 inhabitants – but now, as a state park, it is popular with boaters, hikers, anglers, and campers. The main campground, located in the eastern section of the park, has 54 primitive campsites, a group campground, and two boat-in group sites. The sites have picnic tables and fire rings with drinking water and toilets located nearby, plus a solar shower. Upriver are five smaller campgrounds with no available drinking water.

PHOTO: BW VIA FLICKR



7

**San Elijo State Beach**  
San Elijo State Beach Campground is a popular beach camping destination along the San Diego County coast, only a few miles north of San Diego. The beach is enjoyed by surfers, snorkelers, divers, and beach-combers. Anglers also like to cast their lines into the surf. The campground is spread along the top of a bluff overlooking the ocean, and stairs lead down to the beach. Campground visitors appreciate the availability of hot showers, a convenient camp store, and fast-food restaurant. Some of the 156 sites are limited to RVs or trailers.



8

**Silverwood Lake State Recreation Area**  
Located near Lake Tahoe, you'll be camping high in the heart of San Bernardino National Forest with vistas of snow-capped mountain peaks reflected on the lake. The Mesa Campground has 136 family sites with tables, grills, and fire rings. Each campsite has an eight-person limit. Restrooms and showers are nearby. Seven walk-in sites are for bicyclists and hikers. Three group sites have barbecues, tables, and restrooms with showers. These sites each hold up to 120 people and 30 cars. Miller Canyon's three group sites (without showers) hold 40 people and 20 vehicles. There are no hookups.



9

**San Onofre State Beach**  
San Onofre is one of California's most popular beaches for surfers, swimmers, sunbathers, campers, kayakers, birders, fishermen, and bicyclists. Two separate campgrounds at San Mateo and San Onofre Bluffs have a total of 333 tent or RV campsites. A 1.5-mile nature trail connects the campground to Trestles Beach, the world-class surfing site. All campsites include a fire pit and picnic table. RV hookup sites are available with electricity and water. Other amenities include a dump station, indoor hot showers, and flush toilets.

# TIPS FOR GETTING A CAMPSITE

Reserving a spot to camp can be challenging — whether it's your first time or your twentieth time. Below are several tips to consider if you are having issues reserving the campsite you want.



## TAKE A DAY TRIP

If the campgrounds you want to visit are booked, consider a day visit to the park for a picnic, hike, or other outdoor activity.



## RESERVE ON LESS BUSY DAYS

Plan a weekday getaway. Sometimes reservations are easier to make if you can camp mid-week, instead of on the weekend.



## VISIT LESS POPULAR CAMPSITES

Southern coastal campgrounds can be full year-round. You could have better luck getting reservations at state parks north of Santa Cruz or inland. Look for sites that are more remote and away from major metropolitan areas.



## REMEMBER THE HOLIDAY RUSH

The closer you try to make reservations to a holiday (Memorial Day weekend, Labor Day weekend, etc.), the further north and inland you may need to go.



## CHECK FOR CANCELLATIONS

Check periodically online for cancellations or contact the Customer Call Center at 800-444-7275.



## TRY THE MONTHS OF APRIL, MAY, SEPTEMBER, AND OCTOBER

The “shoulder season” (April, May, September, and October) is a good time to enjoy California's state parks. There are fewer crowds, and the weather during these months is usually great for camping!



## LOOK FOR FIRST-COME-FIRST-SERVED CAMPGROUND SITES

If the reservation sites are full, look for first-come-first-served campgrounds, and try to arrive on a Wednesday or Thursday to maximize your chance to get a campsite. Please call the specific park for details.



## CHECK MAXIMUM TRAILER AND RV LENGTHS

Each campground has different regulations for trailers and RVs; you can check the park you're hoping to visit here: [parks.ca.gov/RVlength](https://parks.ca.gov/RVlength).



## RESEARCH PARK ACCESSIBILITY OPTIONS BEFORE YOU GO

Accessibility is continually improving. You can learn more about each park's camping, picnic areas, trails, beach/shore access, exhibits/programs, and fishing options. For information and updates, visit: [access.parks.ca.gov](https://access.parks.ca.gov).

# CAMPING CHECKLIST

Preparation is essential for your camping trip. Having the necessary supplies and equipment can make a difference in your overall enjoyment and experience. Checklists are a great tool to help with your organization. Your camping list will vary according to the type of camping and activities you have planned, the places you are going, the time of year, and the length of your trip. Add or remove items to suit your individual needs, but most of all, have fun!



## SHELTER AND BEDDING

- Tent
- Sleeping bags
- Sleeping pads
- Pillow
- Headlamps or flashlights (and extra batteries)
- Camp chairs
- Lantern (and mantles and fuel/batteries if needed)



## KITCHEN

- Your favorite camping meals
- Stove and fuel
- Matches/light/firestarter
- Cook pots
- Frying pan
- Eating utensils
- Cooking utensils
- Bottle opener, can opener, corkscrew
- Sharp knife
- Plates/bowls
- Mugs/cups
- Cutting board
- Cooler and ice
- Water bottles
- Camp sink or wash bins
- Biodegradable soap
- Pot scrubber/sponge(s)
- Trash/recycling bags
- Dish towel



## PERSONAL

- Underwear
- T-shirts
- Pants/shorts
- Long-sleeve shirts
- Jacket
- Boots or shoes
- Socks
- Sleepwear
- Swimsuit
- Toilet paper
- Hand sanitizer
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Toiletry kit
- Quick-dry towel
- Prescription medications
- First-aid kit
- Urinary products/sanitation trowel (if no toilets)
- Alcohol wipes
- Spare eyeglasses/contact lens supplies
- Earplugs
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses (and sunglasses straps)
- Lip balm
- Insect repellent



# YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR STATE PARKS. BECOME A MEMBER TODAY.

As any California State Parks Foundation member will tell you, the greatest benefit of membership is the sense of satisfaction that comes from helping protect and maintain the precious state parks you love.

Join with a contribution of \$25 or more per year and you'll receive all the benefits of membership:



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