

# Morro Bay State Park



## Our Mission

The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation 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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### **CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS**

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(916) 653-6995, outside the U.S.

711, TTY relay service

***www.parks.ca.gov***

This park is supported in part through a non-profit organization. For more information contact:  
Central Coast Natural History Association  
20 State Park Road, Morro Bay, CA 93442  
(805) 772-2694, Ext. 101

### **Morro Bay State Park**

**State Park Road**

**Morro Bay, CA 93442**

**(805) 772-7434**

*The area is a gem  
with many facets—  
from a commercial harbor,  
to a renowned state  
and national estuary,  
to a center for recreation  
and education;  
from volcanic Morro Rock  
at the harbor entrance  
to the rich agricultural lands  
drained by Chorro  
and Los Osos Creeks.*



*Windy Cove*

**M**orro Bay State Park, on the shore of Morro Bay located between San Francisco and Los Angeles, looks out over the waters of the bay and beyond to the wind-sculpted sand dunes along the ocean. Visible to the north is Morro Rock, a large, dome-shaped volcanic plug that was an important landmark for mariners over the centuries. With more than 2,700 acres, the park includes Morro Rock Ecological Reserve, the outstanding Morro Bay State Park Museum of Natural History, the Heron Rookery Natural Preserve, the beautiful and highly acclaimed Morro Bay Golf Course, a marina and restaurant, a campground and picnic area, and trails winding into the watersheds feeding the estuary.

The climate is mild in winter and cool in summer, with considerable fog and overcast. Popular activities include camping, boating, fishing, surfing, hiking, mountain biking and bird watching.

## PARK HISTORY

For thousands of years, native Americans inhabited this land. Hunters and gatherers, their way of life was forever altered in the early 1800s when Franciscan padres, with the support of the Spanish military, were sent into the region to gain Christian converts and to secure the land for the Spanish Empire. Morro Bay State Park was once part of several Mexican ranchos.

In the late 1800s, the Morro Bay area was “discovered” as a vacation spot. Recognizing its potential, developers designed the golf course in 1928. The golf course was included in Morro Bay State Park when the park was established in 1934.

## NATURAL HISTORY

### Plant and Animal Life

The diverse vegetation in Morro Bay State Park includes grasslands, freshwater and brackish marshes, and coastal sage scrub.

The bay is a major stop on the Pacific Flyway and the winter home of more than 100 migratory bird species. When the lakes and feeding grounds in the north freeze over, birds flock here by the tens of thousands. There may be 65,000 to 75,000 birds in the bay on a given day, and you can see many of them enjoying the estuary’s smorgasbord.

The **Elfin Forest Natural Preserve** on the southeastern shore of Morro Bay protects extremely rare coastal dune scrub habitat and a forest of diminutive oak trees, while supporting a wide variety of mammals, birds,

reptiles and amphibians. A boardwalk trail overlooking the bay is popular with birdwatchers.

**Morro Estuary Natural Preserve (MENP)** is located on the east side of the park. An 800-acre wetland area where fresh water mixes with salty ocean water, MENP is one of 28 national estuaries and the only state estuary. Among the earth’s richest and most productive habitats, estuaries serve as spawning

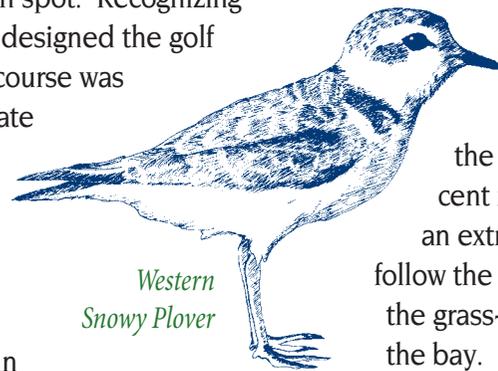
grounds and nurseries for at least two-thirds of our nation’s commercial fisheries. Generally considered to be the largest, least disturbed saltwater marsh on the California coastline, this magnificent natural area provides a haven for an extraordinary range of bird life. Trails follow the edge of the estuary and wind into the grass- and brush-covered hills above the bay.

### Museum of Natural History

This unique attraction of Morro Bay State Park is perched on White Point and offers a spectacular view of the bay. Completely renovated in 2002, the museum’s 26 interactive exhibits tell how natural forces—including humans—shape the earth’s environments and impact all of life. The museum is open daily except Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s Day.

### Morro Rock Ecological Reserve

The spectacular rock at the entrance to Morro Bay is a 23 million-year-old volcanic plug, one of nine similarly rounded and dramatic outcroppings that occur in a line between Morro Bay and San Luis Obispo. Morro Rock



*Western  
Snowy Plover*

was first described by Miguel Costanso and Father Juan Crespi in their journals of the Portolá expedition of 1769.

Morro Rock is home to nesting American peregrine falcons. These endangered birds nest high up 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, as well as for the protection of the peregrine falcons and other wildlife.

### **Heron Rookery Natural Preserve**

The point north of the Museum of Natural History supports a grove of eucalyptus and cypress trees where double-crested cormorants, great egrets and great blue herons nest. Many active nests provide interesting viewing between February and June.

### **RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

There are 135 campsites nestled in a mixed forest originally planted by Civilian Conservation Corps crews during the 1930s. Hot pay showers are provided, and a sanitation station is available. Water and electrical hookups are available in 30 sites. There are two group camping areas with tables, barbecue facilities and fire rings.

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

A popular pastime for many is hiking on the sand spit that separates Morro Bay from the ocean. This spit is part of Montaña de Oro State Park, an area open to day use, but not to camping or fires. Kayaking is also a popular activity in the bay, but be sure to check the tide schedule before embarking.

### **Cerro Cabrillo**

This area has trails that take hikers along chaparral- and grass-covered hillsides, with a beautiful view of the estuary and mud flats. Mountain bikes are welcome on these trails.

### **Marina**

The small boat harbor has a marina that features mooring space, rental canoes and kayaks, and the charming Bayside Cafe.

### **Golf Course**

Located on the hills above the campground, this beautiful 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.

### **ACCESSIBLE FEATURES**

- Exhibits in the Museum of Natural History.
- .15 mile of the museum's paved loop trail
- Trailhead and parking at the museum lot
- Generally accessible unisex restroom at the museum
- One family camp restroom and one group camp restroom

Accessibility is continually improving. For current accessibility details call the park, or visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

### **PLEASE REMEMBER**

- Camp and park within designated areas.
- Do not gather wood.
- Dispose of wastewater and trash properly.
- Keep campfires in designated rings only.
- Do not leave your dog unattended. Dogs must be on a leash (6' maximum) during the day and in an enclosed vehicle or tent at night. They are not permitted on trails or beaches.
- Sounds from electronic equipment must not be audible beyond your camp or picnic site. Generators must not be used between 8 p.m. and 10 a.m. Quiet hours are from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.

### **NEARBY STATE PARKS**

- **Morro Strand State Beach**, 2 miles south of Cayucos (805) 772-7434
- **Montaña de Oro State Park**, 7 miles south of Los Osos (805) 528-0513
- **Los Osos Oaks State Reserve**, 8 miles west of San Luis Obispo and 5 miles east of Morro Bay (805) 772-7434



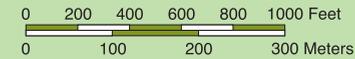
*Morro Bay State Park Golf Course*

# Morro Bay State Park

State Park

## Legend

- |  |                     |  |                       |
|--|---------------------|--|-----------------------|
|  | Paved road          |  | Hike/Bike Campground  |
|  | Trail               |  | Marina                |
|  | Accessible Feature  |  | Parking               |
|  | Boating             |  | Picnic Area           |
|  | Boat Launch         |  | Restrooms             |
|  | Campground          |  | RV                    |
|  | Car Top Boat Launch |  | RV Sanitation Station |
|  | Exhibits            |  | Swamp/Marsh           |
|  | Fishing             |  | Showers               |
|  | Group Campground    |  | Viewpoint             |



BLACK HILL

Black Hill  
661 ft  
201 m

HILL

