

Portola Redwoods State Park



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SaveTheRedwoods.org/csp

Portola Redwoods State Park

9000 Portola State Park Road

La Honda, CA 94020

(650) 948-9098

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*In a natural basin of
mixed evergreen forest
just a short drive from
San Francisco, Portola
Redwoods State Park
provides visitors with their
own secret place.*



At Portola Redwoods State Park, silence and tranquility rule. The 2,800-acre park is situated in the craggy, rough terrain of a deep canyon. Located within the populous San Francisco Bay area, Portola Redwoods offers a hushed getaway from suburban bustle. First- and second-growth coast redwoods stand tall among thick ferns and redwood sorrel in gullies and on north slopes. The park's high ridges and south-facing slopes are covered by Douglas-fir and live oaks.

Among the redwoods, Pescadero and Peters creeks flow along fault lines to form picturesque Tiptoe Falls. Fall Creek, a tributary of Pescadero Creek, tumbles eight feet down a mossy bank into a small pool. Continuing downstream, Fall Creek reaches the lower segment of the falls, enters another pool, cascades six feet over sticks and rocks, then continues its downstream journey.



PARK HISTORY

Native People

The people who first occupied this area were given the name “Costanoan,” meaning “people of the coast,” by Spanish missionaries. Today their descendants prefer the name “Ohlone.”

The ocean, forests and streams provided the Ohlone with plentiful sources for food and shelter. These skilled hunters and traders bartered such items as shells and shell beads. They also traded items of food and abalone shell fishhooks with other native groups living nearby.

The Ohlone made some of what they needed from what they could find. Mussel shells became spoons, and blobs of *asphaltum* (natural black tar that washed up on beaches) were used to waterproof cooking baskets. Asphaltum could also bind *chert* (a quartz-rich rock) points to arrow shafts made from animal bones.

The native people carefully managed their resources and their economy. They

Photo courtesy of The Bancroft Library



*Gaspar de Portolá expedition
“Discovery of the Bay of San Francisco”
Painting by Walter G. Francis, 1909*

used fire to control their grasslands and woodlands, causing oak trees to produce more acorns and attracting wild game to the new growth. Once they began using shell beads for money, the Ohlone restricted production of the beads to avoid inflation.

Eventually overcome by the influence of Santa Cruz Mission, forced labor, and segregation by gender, the Ohlone could not maintain their way of life. Newly introduced diseases killed them by the thousands. Some went to work on local Spanish ranchos. Today, descendants of the original Ohlone people work together to achieve federal tribal recognition.

European Contact

In 1769, the expedition led by Gaspar de Portolá missed today's San Mateo County coastline and discovered another bay that they named San Francisco. Seven years later, Juan Bautista de Anza's expedition came through the area; Anza's group members traded with native people in villages along the way.



The first recorded European settler in the area was Danish immigrant Christian Iverson, reputed to have worked as a Pony Express rider. Iverson's cabin site lies in the southern area of the park. In 1889, Iverson sold his property to lumberman William Page, who established a lumberyard. Page built a haul road, now known as Page Mill Road, which once connected the mill to the Embarcadero in modern-day Palo Alto.

In 1924, the Masonic Lodge's Islam Shrine acquired the property. The Shriners agreed with Page's philosophy that "the property's natural beauty would be maintained." Because membership had dropped by 1945, the lodge sold the property to the State of California to create a new state park.

NATURAL HISTORY

This area is a natural stream basin in a complex geological area along the San Andreas fault. Huckleberries dominate the redwood understory growth, while ferns, redwood sorrel and other shade-tolerant plants grow along the creeksides. California wax myrtle, tan oak, madrone, California bay laurel, big leaf maple and knobcone pine are among the park's tree species. Native ceanothus shrubs bloom as late as midsummer.

State- and federally threatened coho salmon and threatened steelhead trout live in Pescadero Creek. State endangered and federally threatened marbled murrelets nest high in the redwoods. Black-tailed deer, raccoons, gray squirrels, coyotes and mountain lions call Portola their home.



Banana slug

Climate change affects all living things within the redwood forest. Experts fear that the area's increase in average temperature and decrease in thick summer fog and rain will endanger redwoods and the forest life that depend on the redwood environment.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Come prepared for any type of weather. The park gets 40 to 60 inches of rain per year, and the summer months can be foggy and cool.

Visitor Center—The accessible visitor center features interpretive and educational displays with a diorama and a sales area.

Group Camping—Portola Redwoods State Park has four group campgrounds. Ravine Group Camp holds 25 people, and the Hillside, Point and Circle Group Camps each hold 50 people.

Camping—52 family sites, one accessible site and four walk-in environmental sites may be reserved from late spring through mid-autumn. No campsites have hookups.

For site-specific camping information and reservations, visit www.parks.ca.gov or call (800) 444-7275.

Trail Camps—Six sites at Slate Creek Trail Camp are available from late spring through mid-autumn. Trail camps are limited to six people per site. Fires are not permitted, but backpacking stoves are allowed. Bring your own drinking water or a stream water filter. For trail camp reservations, call Big Basin Redwoods State Park at (831) 338-8861.

Four first-come, first-served pedestrian and bicycle sites are located at the Huckleberry Hike and Bike Campground.

Hiking—Eighteen miles of hiking trails range from easy to strenuous. The easy ¾-mile Sequoia Nature Trail begins near



Visitor center

park headquarters and crosses Pescadero Creek. The half-mile Old Tree Trail is also considered an easy hike.

The moderate three-mile Slate Creek Trail winds through redwoods to the Page Mill site. A steep 10-mile hike on Bear Creek Trail leads to a 1.3-mile loop on Peters Creek Trail that traverses an ancient redwood grove.

Picnicking—Picnic areas are near the visitor center. To reserve the 75-person Ramada Group Picnic Area, call (831) 335-3455.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

One reservable Portola campsite, the visitor center and restrooms, and one picnic site are accessible. Currently, no trails are wheelchair-accessible at Portola Redwoods State Park. Accessibility is continually improving throughout California State Parks. For updates, call (916) 445-8949 or visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

PLEASE REMEMBER

Use extreme care during the last few miles of the drive to the park; the road downhill is narrow and steep.

Pets—Pets are permitted in campsites,

picnic areas, paved roads and the Upper and Lower Escape Roads. Dogs must be under human control at all times. During the day, animals must be on a leash no longer than six feet and enclosed in a tent or vehicle at night. Except for service animals, dogs are not allowed on hiking trails or the visitor center.

Bicycles—Single-track trails and designated hiking trails are closed to bikes and horses. Old Haul service road—for hikers, equestrians and cyclists—winds through redwoods to Memorial County Park.

Firewood—Firewood may be purchased at the park office. Please do not gather wood; the health of the forest depends on the nutrients provided by fallen wood that decays and forms mulch.

Quiet hours—Quiet hours are from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m. Do not operate generators between 8 p.m. and 10 a.m. Sounds should not be audible beyond your campsite at any time of the day or night.

Fishing—No fishing is allowed in the park.

Ticks—Ticks are common in this area; some may be infected with Lyme disease. Tuck in cuffs while hiking and check for bites.

Yellowjackets—Attracted to meat and sugar, these wasps live in cavities or underground. They deliver repeated, painful stings. Notify staff if you find a nest where yellowjackets are flying in and out.

Poison Oak—Leaves in groups of three may be green, red, shiny, dull, or even completely absent

in winter. However, even leafless stems can cause a serious reaction. Stay on trails to avoid poison oak.

Nettles—Growing in damp areas such as stream banks, nettles have large spear-shaped leaves with stems up to six feet tall. Tiny, poison-filled nettle hairs can inflict a painful reaction if even lightly touched.

NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Butano State Park
1500 Cloverdale Road
Pescadero 94060 (650) 879-2040
- Castle Rock State Park
15000 Skyline Blvd.
Los Gatos 95030 (408) 867-2952
- Big Basin Redwoods State Park
21600 Big Basin Way
Boulder Creek 95006 (831) 338-8860

This park is supported in part through the
Portola and Castle Rock Foundation
9000 Portola State Park Road, Box F
La Honda, CA 94020



Sequoia Nature Trail

Portola Redwoods State Park

- Legend**
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|--|---|--|-------------------------------|
| | Major Road | | Group Picnic Area |
| | Paved Road | | Locked Gate |
| | Unpaved Fire/Service Road (Open to Hike/Bike/Horse) | | No Public Access |
| | Trail (Hiking Only) | | Parking |
| | Multi-use Trail (Open to Hike/Bike/Horse) | | Picnic Area |
| | Intermittent Stream | | Primitive Campground |
| | Stream | | Restrooms |
| | Accessible Feature | | Showers |
| | Bridge | | Telephone |
| | Campfire Center | | Trailhead |
| | Campground | | Viewpoint |
| | Environmental Campground | | Visitor Center/Ranger Station |
| | Group Campground | | Waterfall |
| | Hike and Bike Campground | | |

