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and invigorating air  
satisfy the park's many  
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or state of mind.*

## 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.

GRAY DAVIS  
Governor

MARY D. NICHOLS  
Secretary for Resources

RUTH COLEMAN  
Acting Director, California State Parks



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<b>P.O. Box 942896</b>	(800)777-0369
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[www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)

**San Clemente State Beach**  
3030 Avenida Del Presidente  
San Clemente, CA 92672  
(949)492-3156

# San Clemente State Beach



**R**ugged sandstone cliffs tower silently above the beach. Waves alternately lap at the shore and crash onto the sand. Rowdy seabirds seem to be darting and diving for their own amusement as well as for food. Sea lions call out boisterously. Surfers challenge the waves. Evening campfires glow on the bluff tops.

Welcome to San Clemente State Beach. Since 1937 San Clemente has been one of the most popular beaches in California. A dramatic setting and invigorating air satisfy its many visitors, whatever their interest, energy level or state of mind. The mile-long beach stretches between the curling ocean surf and the foot of a steep bluff. Midway between Los Angeles and San Diego, the park attracts water sports enthusiasts and those seeking respite from the inland heat or an escape from nearby metropolitan areas.

“San Clemente, world’s best climate,” the slogan of the adjacent town of San Clemente, also describes San Clemente State Beach. Daytime temperatures are in the 60s and 70s almost year-round, while evening temperatures generally hover between the 40s and 50s. Rainfall comes primarily between December and March.



In the spring the beach is often overcast—a soothing counterpoint to the warming inland areas.

### **PARK HISTORY**

San Clemente State Beach was a matching fund gift in 1931 from the H.H. Cotton Company, developer of the nearby city of San Clemente. Ole Hansen, the first project manager for San Clemente, is credited with developing the park,

envisioning it as the new seaside community’s outdoor amenity. The elegant Spanish Colonial style Hansen chose for the town—adobe and frame stucco with tile roofs—extends to the park’s buildings and structures. The Custodian’s Cottage complex, now a visitor center, is a prime example.

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built the park between 1934 and 1937. Their trademark rockwork is evident throughout the park, on picnic tables, and in gutters along the main road. Except for adding electrical hookups and replacing some stands of non-native eucalyptus with trees indigenous to the area, the park retains its original flavor.



*California sycamore*



*Challenging the surf*

### **NATURAL HISTORY**

The park’s sandstone bluffs present a visual history of its geology. Remnants of marine terraces formed under the ocean some 30,000 years ago, the bluffs are the product of countless centuries of rain, wind and sea, punctuated by the occasional cataclysmic flood or storm. The desert badlands look of eroded canyon walls has served as a location for several Western movies.

### **PLANT COMMUNITIES**

Coastal sage scrub occupies the undeveloped bluff top and canyon areas. Monterey cypress, toyon or “Christmas berry,” acacia, sycamore, prickly pear and cholla cacti, aleppo pine, coyote brush and buckwheat grow abundantly. Wild hyacinths, scarlet pimpernel, prickly pear cactus, Mariposa lilies and California poppies color the park with blooms. A rock garden and flowerbed at the entrance to the campground’s hookup area display species native to the San Clemente area.

## WILDLIFE

Stands of eucalyptus trees on the east side of the park provide winter habitat for migratory monarch butterflies. Brush-covered slopes and ravines are ideal hiding places for gray foxes, coyotes, ground squirrels, opossums, Audubon cottontails, raccoons and striped skunks. Lizards, king and gopher snakes, and an occasional rattlesnake represent the reptile community.

More visible is the avian population—mourning doves, northern mockingbirds, great horned owls, hawks, ravens and even wild flocks of green Amazon parrots share the skies and trees with an almost infinite variety of shore birds.

At low tide, at the park's northern end, a rock formation is home to mussels, sea urchins, sea stars, limpets and shore crabs. Offshore, California sea lions play and rest on the rocks. In early winter and spring, migrating California gray whales pass by.



*Enjoying the ocean*

## RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The ocean dominates the park's activities. Trails follow two of the scenic ravines that cut through steep sandstone cliffs, providing easy access to the beach from the day-use parking area. Swimming, body surfing, board surfing, snorkeling and sunbathing are equally popular. While experienced surfers appreciate the challenging surf break, the beach also accommodates beginning surfers.

Bass, croaker, corvina and barred perch attract surf-fishing enthusiasts. In season during high tide, grunion come ashore to lay their eggs in the sand. They may only be caught by hand. A fishing license is required for all anglers age 16 and over.

The Nature Trail and the Butterfly Trail skirt the edge of the park. During the summer park staff conduct campfire programs, junior ranger programs and hikes. Event schedules are posted around the park.

## CAMPING AND PICNICKING

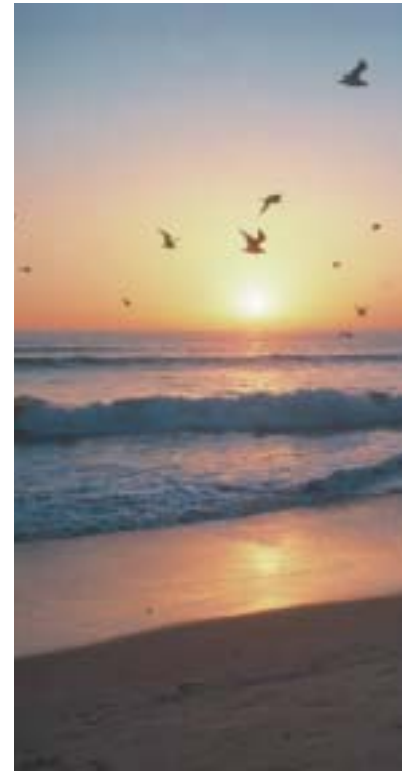
The family campground sits high atop the bluffs. Each of the 160 sites has a fire ring, picnic table and shade ramada, with water nearby. The RV area in the family campground accommodates 72 recreational vehicles, and has water, electrical and sewage hookups. A group camping area can handle 50 people and 20 vehicles, trailers included. Each campground has hot showers, flush toilets and a sink area.

A picnic area delivers sweeping vistas of the Pacific Ocean from bluffs 150 feet above the beach. Two group picnic areas are also

available. The visitor center is adjacent to the 200-space parking area.

## PLEASE REMEMBER

- Riptides—brownish, swirling stretches of water moving out from the shore—occur sporadically here. If you are caught in one, do not try to swim against it to shore. Relax and swim crossways to the tide (parallel to the beach) until you have passed the current, then head for shore.
- Do not climb the bluffs! They are unstable and extremely dangerous. The earth crumbles and breaks down under the weight of people and animals. Stay on the trails.
- Dogs must be on a six-foot leash at all times and must not be left unattended. Keep dogs inside your vehicle or tent during nighttime hours. Noisy or vicious dogs will be removed from the campground. No dogs are allowed on trails or the beach.
- Vehicles must be parked in legally marked spaces and must remain on the pavement at all times. Day-use and guest vehicles must park in the day-use parking lot.



- Bicycles are not permitted on the dirt trails.
- Alcoholic beverages are permitted only in individual campsites.
- Quiet hours are from 10:00 p.m. until 6:00 a.m. Radios, TVs and generators must be off between the hours of 8:00 p.m. and 10:00 a.m. Radio noise must be limited to the immediate area of your campsite.
- Fires are allowed at campsites in the provided fire ring only. They are not permitted on the beach.
- Collecting of dead wood is prohibited.
- Articles may not be tied or hung from trees or brush.
- Do not feed any wild animals.
- Camping reservations are recommended year-round. To make reservations call (800)444-7275 between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time.

### ACCESSIBLE FEATURES &

- Six campsites, restrooms and showers, and ten picnic sites near the parking lot. (Call ahead for specific information.)
- The Butterfly Trail and the visitor center. (Call ahead to reserve one of two beach sand chairs.)
- The trail to the beach is steep—call ahead for assistance.

### NEARBY STATE PARKS

- San Onofre State Beach, south of San Clemente on I-5 (949)492-0802/492-4872
- Doheny State Beach, at Dana Point, off Pacific Coast Highway (949)496-6171/492-0802

