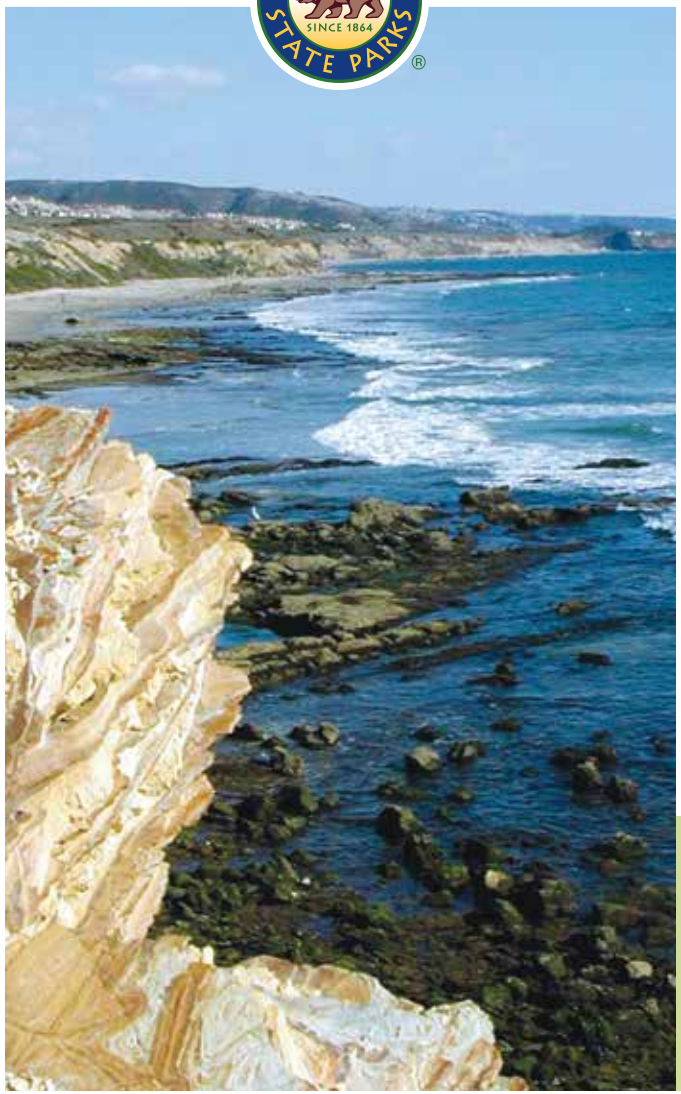
Crystal Cove

State Park



Our Mission

The mission of California State Parks 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.

California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at **(949) 494-3539**. If you need this publication in an alternate format, contact **interp@parks.ca.gov**.

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Sacramento, CA 94296-0001
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(916) 653-6995, outside the U.S.
711, TTY relay service

www.parks.ca.gov

Discover the many states of California.™

Crystal Cove State Park
8471 N. Coast Highway
Laguna Beach, CA 92651
(949) 494-3539
www.parks.ca.gov/crystalcove

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The ocean and shoreline, visible from nearly all points along Pacific Coast Highway, dominate the coastal portion of the park. From the high ridges above Moro Canyon, visitors enjoy an expansive view of the ocean, the interior valleys and the mountain ranges beyond.



Crystal Cove State Park's rolling surf, wide sandy beaches, tide pools, gently sloping hills, and deeply wooded canyons and ridges provide a delightful contrast to its urban surroundings. Located off busy Pacific Coast Highway between Corona del Mar and Laguna Beach, Crystal Cove is one of Orange County's largest remaining examples of open space and natural seashore.

The park's Mediterranean climate is characterized by moist, foggy summer mornings, with the fog burning off by midmorning to bring warm, sunny days and cool evenings.

PARK HISTORY

Native People

For over nine thousand years, the native people established villages in Moro Canyon near two natural springs. Their food sources included waterfowl, fish from the kelp beds and surf zones, and a variety of plants and animals. The prehistoric people developed a number of specialized crafts and tools including nets, fishhooks, basketry, stone implements, ritual objects and tule canoes.

With the arrival of Spanish missionaries, the native people were drawn into the mission system. At Mission San Gabriel and Mission San Juan Capistrano, their way of life changed with the introduction of new religious and agricultural practices.

Rancho San Joaquin

After José Andrés Sepulveda acquired land from the Mexican government in 1836, Mission San Juan Capistrano's grazing area became known as "Rancho San Joaquin." With the assistance of a Native American workforce, Sepulveda used Moro Canyon's seasonal pastures for cattle grazing. After 1850, a run of bad luck—along with land title complications—pushed Sepulveda into debt. He sold Rancho San Joaquin in 1864.

The Irvine Ranch Company

San Francisco financier James Irvine and three northern California ranchers purchased the rancho and stocked it with thousands of sheep. In 1876 Irvine bought out his partners when ranching failed due to droughts, wool infestations, and competitive markets. After Irvine's death in 1886, sheep ranching continued as other ranching activities developed.

James Irvine II inherited the ranch from his father and diversified the agricultural business by leasing land to tenant farmers. He incorporated his land holdings and created "The Irvine Company" on June 4, 1894.

Japanese Farmers

Beginning in 1927, Japanese farmers leased land from The Irvine Company and built homes, barns, and a community center known as "Laguna Beach Language School" (a building now preserved within the Historic District). Planting hundreds of acres of crops, the farmers sold produce from roadside stands and to Los Angeles markets.

Life changed dramatically during World War II when the Japanese community was sent to an internment camp in Poston, Arizona. As a result, they forever lost their farms and homes along the Crystal Cove hills.



Laura Davick Collection courtesy of Phyllis Parker Lowe

Just as in the 1940s, today's Crystal Cove has something for everyone.

Although the Japanese farmers did not return to the area, agriculture and ranching practices continued into the 1970s. Over the years, The Irvine Company leased their land for farming, equestrian use and cattle grazing. During the early days of park ownership, these activities ended in order to enhance natural preservation and public recreation.

Crystal Cove

The Irvine Company also leased the coastal area to filmmakers and vacationers. Palm-thatched structures emerged at Crystal Cove, serving as both tropical movie backdrops and beach cottage rentals.

Beginning in the 1920s, people traveled the new Pacific Coast Highway to visit the beach. The Cove soon became a popular destination to pitch tents or rent cottages. By the late 1930s, The Irvine Company limited the development of the area to the current 46 cottages. In time, long-term leases were made, tent camping was eliminated, and the Crystal Cove community became a private beach.

The National Register of Historic Places listed Crystal Cove for its unique vernacular architecture in 1979, the year The Irvine Company sold this land to the State of California. The cottages have been restored by California State Parks and the Crystal Cove Alliance for public use and enjoyment.

Crystal Cove State Park is part of the 40,000-acre Irvine Ranch National and California Natural Landmark. This designation has been bestowed by both the State of California and the U.S. Department of the Interior to recognize the exceptional value of these lands to California and the nation. Please visit **www.letsgooutside.org** for information.



Live oak



Historic District

Moro Beach and Canyon

"Tyron's Camp" (a café, auto camp, and tent campground) opened during the 1920s along the beach and inland at Moro Canyon. In the late 1950s, the complex evolved into a seasonal trailer destination known as "El Morro Beach Trailer Park." Later, about 300 permanent manufactured homes replaced seasonal beach trailers in this area. After tenants' leases expired in 2005, the trailers were removed to develop the Moro Campground and day-use facility.

NATURAL HISTORY

Coastal Strand

The beach's 3.2 miles are bordered by hardy, fleshy-leafed plants growing low against salt-sprayed dunes. Shoreside tide pools are visible at low tide.

Coastal Bluffs

At high tide, the surf laps against the base of 80-foot bluffs. Two bluff-top public parking areas, Reef Point and Pelican Point, offer access to the beach.

Flora

The park has distinct plant communities—specific habitats with conditions that favor some types of plants and animals over others.

Coastal Sage Scrub

This dense shrub community spreads across the coastal terrace, along the sides of lower Moro Canyon and upper Moro Canyon, especially on the north-facing reaches. The resinous, highly flammable vegetation regenerates quickly after burning.



Annual Grasses

These introduced grasses grow extensively on the terraces and to a lesser extent in lower Moro Canyon.

Southern Riparian Woodland

Along the small watershed represented by seasonal Moro Creek, sycamores, oaks and willows are found. Undergrowth includes elderberry, toyon and lemonade berry.

Fauna
The intertidal wildlife includes purple shore crabs, sea hares and sea anemones. On the bluffs and terraces, ground squirrels, cottontail rabbits, western fence lizards, California king snakes, California gnatcatchers, California quail and deer are found. The park's open space areas offer habitat for coyotes, bobcats, roadrunners, gopher snakes, western toads, red-tail hawks, California thrashers, rattlesnakes and more.

RECREATION

Reservations are imperative for all historic cottages, coastal campsites and backcountry sites at Crystal Cove. For details and links to site-specific reservations, call (800) 444-7275 or visit the website at **www.parks.ca.gov/crystalcove**.

Coastal Camping
Completed in 2011, Moro Campground offers 57 sites with unparalleled ocean views. Hookups serve 27 sites; the other 30 are suitable for tents, tent trailers or van conversions.

Backcountry Primitive Camping
A fairly strenuous, 3- to 4-mile uphill hike leads to three separate camping areas. Campers must pack in and out all of their supplies, including water.

Backcountry Trails
From the Moro Canyon parking lot, access 2,400 undeveloped acres. The trails are open to hiking, biking and equestrian use. Maps are available at the ranger station.

Beach Activities
Seven separate coves line 3.2 miles of beach, offering spectacular sunbathing, swimming, surfing, diving and tide pool viewing. Please do not disturb tide pool residents.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The park welcomes special events, including weddings, picnics, parties and film shoots. For event reservations and permit information, please visit **www.parks.ca.gov/crystalcove/specialevents**.



LODGING AND FOOD SERVICES

The park's concession partner, the Crystal Cove Alliance, provides food and overnight lodging services at the Beachcomber Café, Crystal Cove Shake Shack, and Crystal Cove Beach Cottages. For details, visit **www.crystalcovealliance.org** and **www.thebeachcombercafe.com**.



MOVIES MADE AT CRYSTAL COVE

1918
Treasure Island

1920
The Sea Wolf

1923
Stormswept

1927
The Wreck of the Hesperus

1928
Sadie Thompson
Half a Bride
White Shadows in the South Seas

1929
The Isle of Lost Ships

1932
Rain

1934
Treasure Island

1938
The Great Heart

1944
To Have and Have Not

1951
Two of a Kind

1974
Herbie Rides Again

1985
The Creator

1988
Beaches

WATER SAFETY TIPS

- **Swim with a friend**—Supervise children closely. Flotation devices are not reliable.
- **Water use areas**—Swimming, surfing and kayaking zones are separate from each other; check to make sure your activity is taking place in the proper zone. Contact park staff for additional beach safety information.
- **Rip currents**—If you become caught in a rip current, relax, swim parallel to the shore until the pull stops, and then swim back to shore. If you are unable to return to the beach, tread water and signal for assistance.
- **Avoid spinal injuries**—Do not dive headfirst into unfamiliar waters.
- **Be alert**—Never turn your back on the ocean. Sudden waves can sweep you away from shore or tide pool areas.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

Picnicking—Picnic areas and restrooms are accessible. Refer to the park map.

Trails—The Bluff Top Multi-Use Trail is paved and accessible. Hikers and cyclists may also enjoy its wildlife and scenic views with interpretive displays.

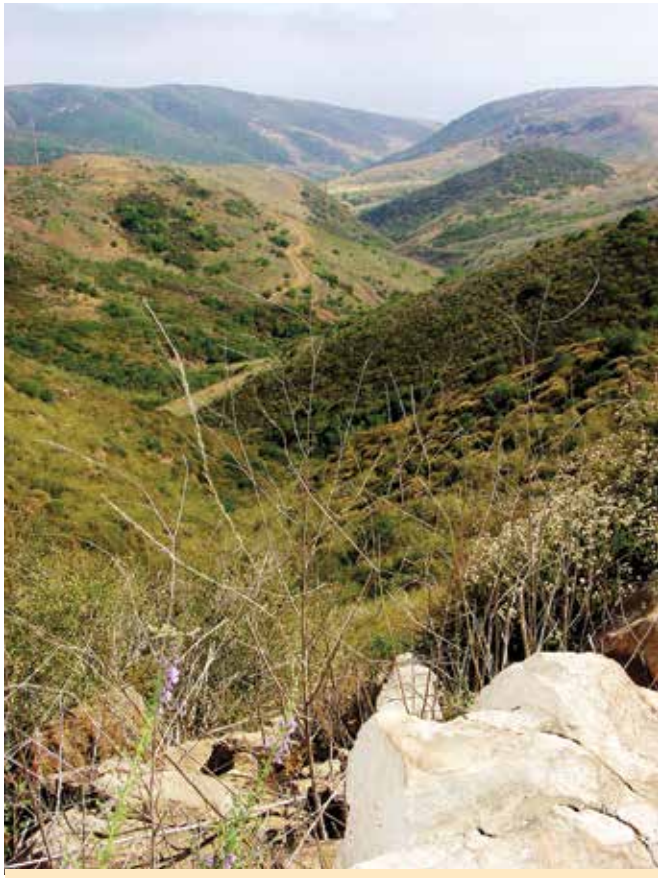
Beach/shore access—Beach wheelchairs are available first-come, first-served. Beach access is at the Crystal Cove Historic District and Moro Beach.

Exhibits and programs—The park visitor centers at El Moro and the Historic District are accessible.

Food/lodging services—Concession operations are accessible. Four rental cottages are ADA-accessible and may be reserved with written evidence of need.

NEARBY STATE PARKS

- **Huntington State Beach**, Pacific Coast Highway (Highway 1) at Beach Blvd. (Highway 39) (714) 536-1454
- **Doheny State Beach**, off Pacific Coast Highway (Highway 1) at Dana Point Harbor at Del Obispo St. (949) 496-6171



Backcountry wilderness area—part of the Irvine Ranch National and California Natural Landmark

PLEASE REMEMBER

- Park hours are 6 a.m. to sunset daily, year round. Historic District hours are 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.
- Possession of alcohol is prohibited throughout the park except at the Beachcomber Café and within campsites at Moro Campground.
- Dogs must be kept on a leash no more than six feet long. Pets may be walked on paved areas only, and they must not be left unattended. Except for service animals, pets are not permitted on the beach or in the backcountry.
- All tide pool specimens are protected by state law. Collection of shells and rocks is prohibited.
- All natural, cultural and historical park resources are protected by law.
- Stay on established trails. Children and pets should be closely supervised.
- Do not climb on or approach the cliff faces—they are unstable and can collapse under you.
- No fires are allowed on or in the sand. Hibachis or barbecues are permitted—gas canister type only. Wood or charcoal is not permitted. Open flames are not permitted in the backcountry.

This park receives support in part from a nonprofit organization:
Crystal Cove Alliance
Cottage #5
Crystal Cove Historic District
Newport Coast, CA 92657
www.crystalcovealliance.org


Crystal Cove State Park
CRYSTAL COVE HISTORIC DISTRICT
to Entrance Station
to pedestrian underpass to Los Trancos Parking and Park Office
Garage
Visitor Center/ Interpretive Store
Outdoor Commons
Shake Shack
Park and Marine Research Facility
Crystal Cove Alliance Headquarters
Pedestrian Bridge
Beachcomber Cafe
Exhibit Center
Film and Media Center
Cultural Center
Overnight Check in
Beach Promenade
Boardwalk
North Beach
South Beach
Pacific Ocean
Pacific Coast Hwy
Bluff Top Trail
Stairway
Los Trancos Creek
0 500 Feet 0 150 Meters
CORONA DEL MAR STATE BEACH
PELICAN HILL RESORT
NEWPORT COAST
Newport Coast Dr
San Joaquin Hills Rd
Ridge Park Rd
Ridge Park Entrance
Bommer Canyon
San Joaquin Toll Road
Irvine Ranch National Natural Landmark
No Name Ridge Road
Deer Canyon
Bommer Ridge Rd
Vista Ridge Rd
Muddy Ridge Entrance
Los Trancos Parking Area
Crystal Cove Historic District
see Crystal Cove Historic District detail map above
see Crystal Cove Underwater Park detail map below
CRYSTAL COVE PROMENADE
CRYSTAL COVE STATE PARK
CRYSTAL COVE UNDERWATER PARK
LAGUNA COAST WILDERNESS PARK
Moro Visitor Center
El Morro School
Moro Campground
Moro Canyon
Lower Moro Ridge
Upper Moro Ridge
Poles Rd
No Dogs Road
West Cut Across
East Cut Across
Tenaja Trail
Trabuco Trail
Slow 'N Easy
Elsevior Road
Missing Link Trail
Ridge Rd
Moro Ridge Road
Emerald Ridge
Pelican Point
Reef Point
Abalone Point
LAGUNA BEACH
Pacific Coast Hwy
Burbank
Pasadena
Los Angeles
Pomona
Anaheim
Santa Ana
Long Beach
Huntington Beach
Newport Beach
Crystal Cove SP
Irvine
San Juan Capistrano
Dana Point
San Clemente
Camp Pendleton USMC
Chino Hills SP
Bolsa Chica SB
Huntington SB
Doheny SB
San Clemente SB
Cleveland National Forest
Santa Catalina Island
0 5 10 Miles 0 5 10 15 Kilometers
0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Mile 0 0.5 1.0 1.5 Kilometers
N
Legend
Freeway
Major Hwy
Paved Road
Unpaved Road
Trail
Accessible Trail
Boardwalk
Water Depth (feet)
★ = Special Event Venue
For permit details visit www.parks.ca.gov/crystalcove/specialevents
Accessible Feature
Bicycle Trail
Campground
Environmental Campground
Diving
Food Services
Locked Gate
Parking
Picnic Area
Ranger Station
Restrooms
Surfing
Viewpoint
Overnight Cottages
Park Building
0 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 0.5 Miles 0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 Kilometers
Pelican Point Entrance
Los Trancos Entrance
Reef Point Entrance
Laguna Beach Water District
Moro Canyon Day Use
Tunnel to Beach
Moro Cove Overlook
Lifeguard Headquarters
Historic Anchor
Scotchman's Cove
3.5 Cove
Rocky Bight
Crystal Cove
Treasure Cove
Little Treasure Cove
Viewpoint Path
Boardwalk
Pelican Point Reef
2nd Reef
3rd Reef
Split Rock
Corsair F4U crash site
NEWPORT BEACH
Moro Beach
Bluff Top Trail
Stairway
Bluff
Ridge Road
Canyon Road
No Dogs Road
Moro Ridge Road
B.F.I.
Muddy Canyon
Los Trancos Canyon
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Map by GIS Unit, Cartography Section, CA