

A Dog Lover's Guide To California State Park

Millions of dogs along with their owners visit California State Parks every year. Thanks to the natural diversity of state parks, dog owners can choose many areas to enjoy with their pets.

Latest figures show indicate that more than five million Californians own dogs and want to find a place for them to enjoy their pets in open spaces, especially as open spaces in cities become more scarce.

California State Parks provide opportunities for high-quality recreation while protecting California's priceless wildlife heritage. In most parks, dogs are restricted to campground and picnic areas. A few parks have trail areas where visitors can take their dogs for a hike. (Dogs are not permitted at Ano Nuevo State Reserve and a number of other beaches and parks.)

It's always a good idea to call ahead before you bring your dog, since conditions can change, such as wildlife habitat protection, revegetation and other projects.

Here are some state parks where you can bring your dog:

Asilomar State Beach, in Pacific Grove, allows dogs on leash. For more information, call (831) 372-8016.

Doheny State Beach, off Highway One at Dana Point, allows dogs in the campground area. For more information, call (949) 496-6171 or (949) 492-0802.

Leo Carrillo State Park, 28 miles northwest of Santa Barbara on Highway One, allows dogs in the North Beach area. For more information, call (818) 880-0350 or (805) 986-8591.

Plumas-Eureka State Park, four miles west of Graeagle in northern California, allows dogs in the campground area. For more information, call (530) 836-2380.

Point Mugu State Park, 15 miles south of Oxnard in southern California, allows dogs at Thornhill Broom Beach. For more information, call (818) 880-0350.

San Buenaventura State Beach, in Ventura, allows dogs in the picnic area and on the bike path. For more information, call (805) 648-4127.

To protect your dog and park visitors, here are some friendly reminders:

* To make everyone's visit to California's state parks more pleasant, don't leave your pets unattended, and please clean up after them.

* Keep your dog on a controlled leash no more than six feet long. Leashes protect dogs from becoming lost and from wilderness hazards, such as porcupines and sick, injured or rabid animals. A leashed dog's keen senses can enhance owners' awareness of nearby wildlife or other park visitors. And leashed dogs help protect endangered wildlife.

* If you leave your pet in a vehicle, remember that it may get too hot, even with the windows partly open - some dogs left in cars have suffocated. At night, keep your dog in your tent or vehicle to prevent conflicts between him and other dogs, wildlife (in particular skunks), or passing campers.

* Don't take your dog (unless he's a seeing eye dog) into buildings or on trails, unless otherwise indicated. Most people hike park trails to see the wildlife and escape city noises; a dog chasing a wild animal or barking will spoil their outdoor experience.

* For sanitary reasons, dogs are not permitted on many beaches -- check with the ranger.

* Keep your dog calm and quiet. Vicious or unusually noisy dogs will not be allowed in the park.

* Remember, you are financially responsible for injuries or damage caused by your dog.

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