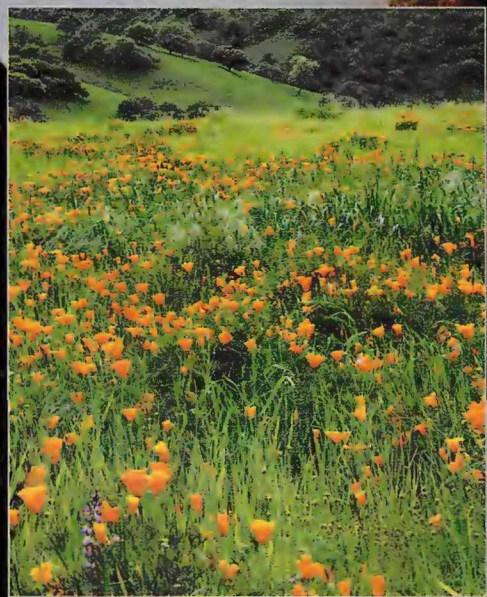
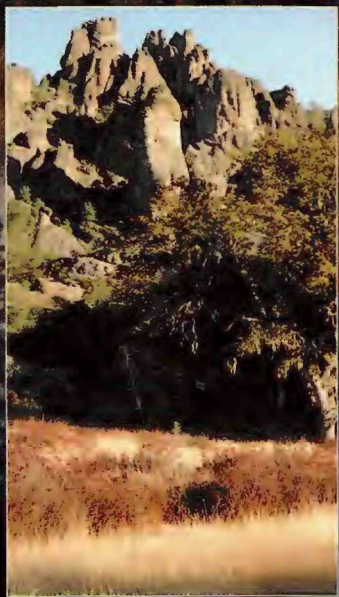
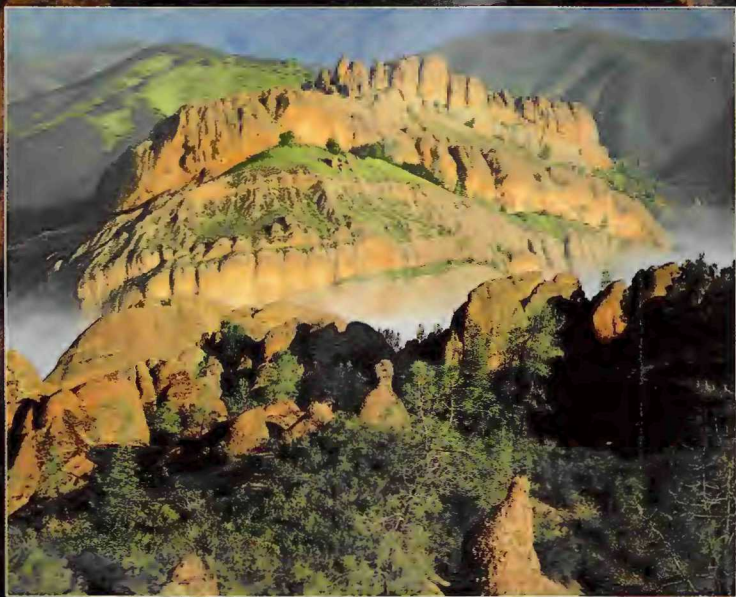




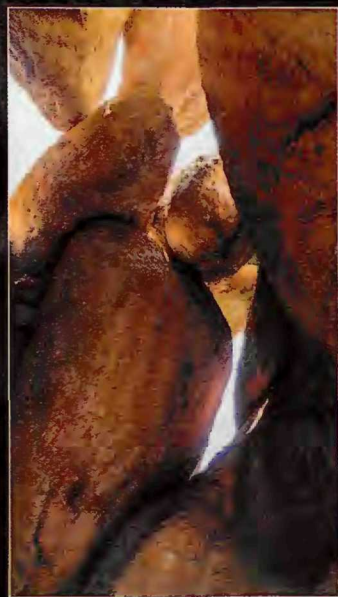
Poppies near an oak woodland
© DAVID MUECHER



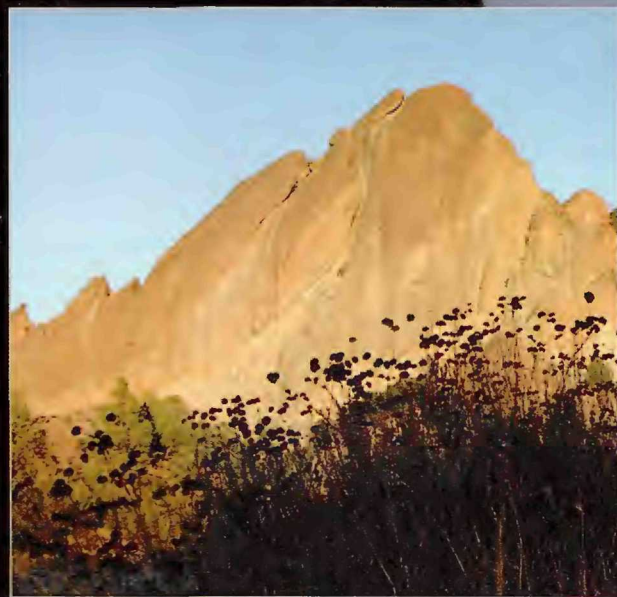
High Peaks in autumn
© PAUL G. JOHNSON



Balconies
© LARRY JUNCH



Talus boulders
NPS / YONGQIANG LI



California buckwheat set against Machete Ridge in winter
© PAUL G. JOHNSON



Indian warrior and manzanita
© LARRY JUNCH

The Forces of Beauty

The difference is immediately apparent. Rock spires, ramparts, and crags that bear no resemblance to the nearby foothills dominate the landscape here. Massive monoliths, sheer-walled canyons, and boulder-covered caves define millions of years of erosion, faulting, and tectonic plate movement.

Rising out of the chaparral-covered Gabilan Mountains, east of central California's Salinas Valley, are the spectacular remains of part of an ancient volcanic field. One third of this field lies 195 miles to the south-east. Does this seem impossible? It is part of the story of the San An-

dreas Fault Zone, which runs just east of the park, and of the forces that have shaped this landscape for millions of years. It is the story of heat, frost, water, and wind wearing away rock. Fault action and earthquakes also account for Pinnacles' talus caves, formed when boulders fell into deep, narrow gorges and lodged between the rock walls. These boulders form ceilings and areas of darkness, enticing visitors and many species of bats. Pinnacles' topography is not all spires and crags. Much of the park consists of rolling hills that range in elevation from 824 feet along Chalone Creek to 3,304 feet atop North Chalone Peak.

Pinnacles was proclaimed a national monument in 1908. A national park since 2013, it includes over 26,000 acres—much of which is designated wilderness. The park protects natural and cultural features, recreational opportunities, and open space in an increasingly urban setting.

Pinnacles is a place for rejuvenation. People come to appreciate the unspoiled wilderness, hike the trails, climb rock walls, explore quiet caves, stargaze in clear night skies, and picnic or camp in the shade of ancient oaks. Please help us continue the work of previous generations and preserve Pinnacles National Park for future visitors.

Critical Habitat for California Critters



Varied topography and weather, as well as the National Park System, help protect Pinnacles' many habitats for plant and animal species. Chaparral (a plant community characterized by a variety of evergreen drought-resistant shrubs) and other vegetation provide shelter and food for birds, mammals, reptiles, and insects. With 400 species of bees, the park protects the largest diversity of bees in a single place in North America.

The California red-legged frog (below) is the largest native frog in the western United States. Once an endangered species, it is re-establishing here. You may see this nocturnal frog around Bear Gulch Reservoir.

Stewardship in Action Pinnacles National Park is a nesting area for the California condor (above) and is one of a few release sites in the United States and Mexico. Loss of habitat, shootings, and poisoning from lead bullets—in gut piles or lodged in animal carcasses that the bird feeds on—led to its listing as an endangered species in 1967. An aggressive captive breeding program in the 1980s and '90s increased its chances for survival. One of the largest birds in North America, the condor weighs about 20 pounds and has a wingspan of 9½ feet. It soars on thermal updrafts at speeds of 55 miles per hour and altitudes of 15,000 feet. You may see condors flying over the high peaks at Pinnacles.



Several bat species find refuge in Pinnacles' caves, cliffs, and trees. Balconies Cave attracts solitary males that roost in tiny cracks, away from human disturbance. Bear Gulch Cave hosts a maternal colony of Townsend's big-eared bats (above), unusual because they stay in the park year-round. They breed and raise pups in spring and summer and hibernate in winter.



Faults, Volcanoes, and Erosion

The Earth's crust consists of plates that fit together like pieces of a puzzle. These plates are always moving, some diving under others (subduction), others grinding past each other along fault zones.

Our Pinnacles story began millions of years ago when the central part of the Farallon plate subducted under the southwestern part of the North American plate, creating Califor-

nia's Coast Range and spawning volcanic activity. After the central Farallon plate's subduction, the Pacific plate collided with and wrenched off a chunk of the North American plate, creating the San Andreas Fault Zone. Molten rock poured through fissures that opened as plates ground against each other.

The Pinnacles volcanic field—believed to be 15 miles long and 8,000 feet high—was born 23 million years ago. The volcanoes were not

where the Pinnacles are now but 195 miles to the southeast (see *Neenach Formation on map below*). How did these fantastic rocks get here? As the Pacific plate crept north, it split the volcanic field and carried two-thirds of the Pinnacles' volcanics with it, leaving behind the Neenach Formation. On the Pinnacles' slow journey, the mass sank beneath the surface. In time, the power of wind, rain, ice exposed the old volcanic field, eroded the rubble, and the Pinnacles formation was born.

Volcanoes

Fault zones are likely places for volcanoes to occur. Here the Earth's crust is broken, allowing magma to ooze up from below the surface or gases and ash to suddenly erupt as pressure is

released. Many land volcanoes are found near plate boundaries. But most volcanism—about three-quarters of all lava eruptions on Earth—takes place beneath the ocean.



Faults

The San Andreas Fault Zone slices through 600 miles of California. Along it the Pacific and North American plates crunch past each other—one headed north, the other west. The offshore Mendocino fracture zone (above) is the northernmost extent of the San Andreas fault system. The fault is part of the Ring of Fire (right), a zone of earthquake and volcanic activity partly encircling the Pacific Ocean.

Erosion

Erosion from weather, water, and wind is responsible for the spires and towers you see at Pinnacles today. Water—the most powerful force—erodes by seeping into cracks, freezing, expanding, and prying off flakes and chips of the brittle rock.

Where the rock is weak, erosion works more quickly; stronger rock resists these forces. Over millions of years, these changes scoured nearly a mile of rock from the volcanoes, resulting in the distinctive rocks seen throughout the park.

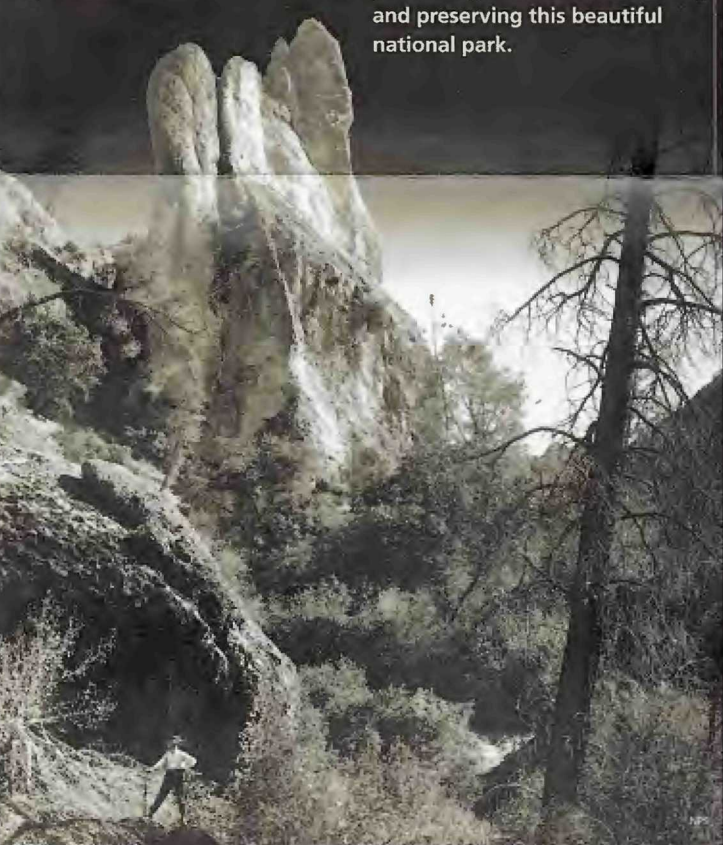
Grassroots Movement
The People's Park



People have lived nearby for hundreds of years, but we still know little about them. Chalone and Mutsun Indians were hunter-gatherers who seasonally harvested the area's resources. In the 1700s Spanish missionaries introduced a new religion and lifestyle but unwittingly brought diseases that almost decimated Pinnacles' Native Americans.

Emigrants arrived next. Pinnacles soon became a destination for picnics, festivities, camping, and exploration.

Homesteader Schuyler Hain, who led tours of the caves for years, began a grassroots preservation campaign. Stanford University president David Starr Jordan, US Forest Service chief Gifford Pinchot, and local families joined in. Their efforts paid off in 1908 when President Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed these geological formations a national monument. In the 1930s the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built trails, tunnels, and the Bear Gulch Dam and day use area. Today's visitors join a long tradition of treasuring and preserving this beautiful national park.



Fantastic
Flowers

Pinnacles' Mediterranean climate—hot, dry summers, cool winters, and moderate rain-fall—influences the park's plants and trees. Chaparral, with its dense, woody ever-green shrubs, dominates the landscape. Woodlands offer blue oak and gray pine. Riparian areas flaunt ferns and mosses. Meadows sprout native and exotic grasses. Cliffs support multicolored lichens. And every spring a miracle seems to happen. Wildflowers—over 100 species—burst into bloom, dazzling the eye with color.



Larkspur



California buckeye



Elegant clarkia



California buckwheat



Mariposa lily



Bush poppy



Gray mule-ears



Sticky monkeyflower

Excellent Exploration

Hiking Pinnacles National Park has over 30 miles of trails, ranging from easy to strenuous. Many trails intersect, and you can plan a short loop or a longer all-day trip. Trails are self-guiding. Popular destinations are Bear Gulch Reservoir, High Peaks, and the Balconies area (see detail map and trail chart at right).

Exploring the Two Caves Balconies and Bear Gulch caves are talus caves created when boulders formed a roof over a narrow canyon. Some cave areas are narrow and twisting, with low ceilings and uneven footing. Passing through may require scrambling over rocks and wading through water. The caves are dark; use a flashlight. Caves may be closed by flooding. Portions of Bear Gulch Cave are closed seasonally to protect sensitive bat species. Contact the park or check our website for the status of caves.

Rock Climbing The rock at Pinnacles, mostly volcanic breccia and tuff, is weak compared to the granite and basalt of many climbing areas. Technical rock climbing is recommended only for persons well-trained and properly equipped. Bolts, nylon slings, and protection hardware are not maintained by the park. Pinnacles rock can be so unstable that even new bolts may fail. Always test holds and bolts before trusting your life to them. Climbers should be alert for rocks that may become dislodged or equipment that may be dropped onto unwary hikers below.

Before climbing at Pinnacles contact the park or check our website for information. Be familiar with the park's climbing bulletins before your

climb. For detailed descriptions of routes and difficulty refer to a climber's guide, available online, at bookstores, and at the visitor center.

When to Visit The park is open year-round, 24 hours a day. The busiest times are mid-February to early June, when the weather is comfortable and the wildflowers glorious. Weekends during those months are especially crowded, and you may need to park in one of the overflow lots.

If you enjoy solitude, exploring peaceful trails, or discovering wildlife, why not try something different? Visit on a weekday or off-season. Bring a picnic dinner. Hike along Chalone Creek in the moonlight. Stroll along Old Pinnacles Trail when it is raining. Watch for condors soaring on warm updrafts, woodpeckers burying acorns in the bark of gray pines, or bobcats trotting along the road.

Would you like to learn firsthand about bats? How about seeing the Milky Way in a sky unpolluted by city lights? Ranger-led programs are available seasonally, as staffing allows (reservations may be required). Some activities are available year-round. Read park bulletin boards or contact the park about schedules.

Our Birds and Bats Raptors (birds of prey), cliff-dwelling birds, and bats rear young in many rock formations. Please do not enter or climb in these areas during critical breeding seasons. For restrictions contact the park, ask a ranger, or check our website.

A Wilderness Wonder

Congress has protected nearly 16,000 acres of Pinnacles National Park as wilderness under the 1964 Wilderness Act. Wilderness is meant to protect forever the land's natural conditions, opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, and scientific, educational, and historical values. In wilderness, people can sense being a part of the whole community of life on Earth. Preserving wilderness shows restraint and humility and benefits the generations that follow us. Visit www.wilderness.net.

Pinnacles National Park is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities visit www.nps.gov.

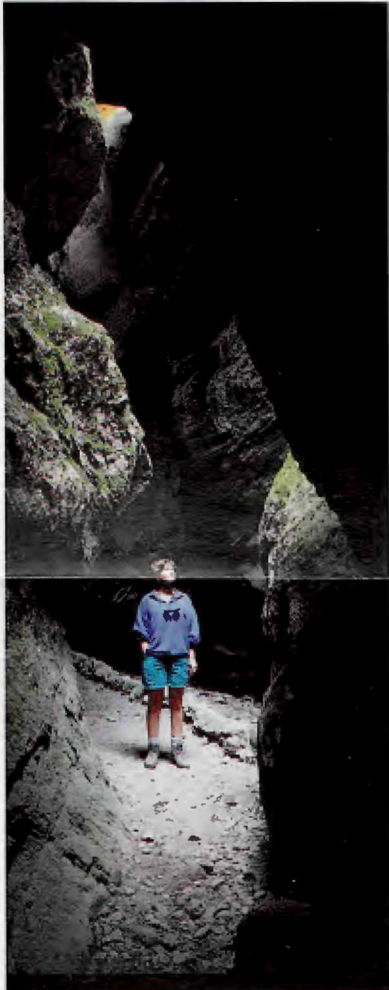


Getting to the park Pinnacles National Park is in central California, about 50 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean and 140 miles south of the San Francisco Bay area. **WARNING: CA 146 does NOT go through the park.** To get from one entrance to the other (east or west) you must drive around the park; allow about two hours driving time.

Try Out A Trail

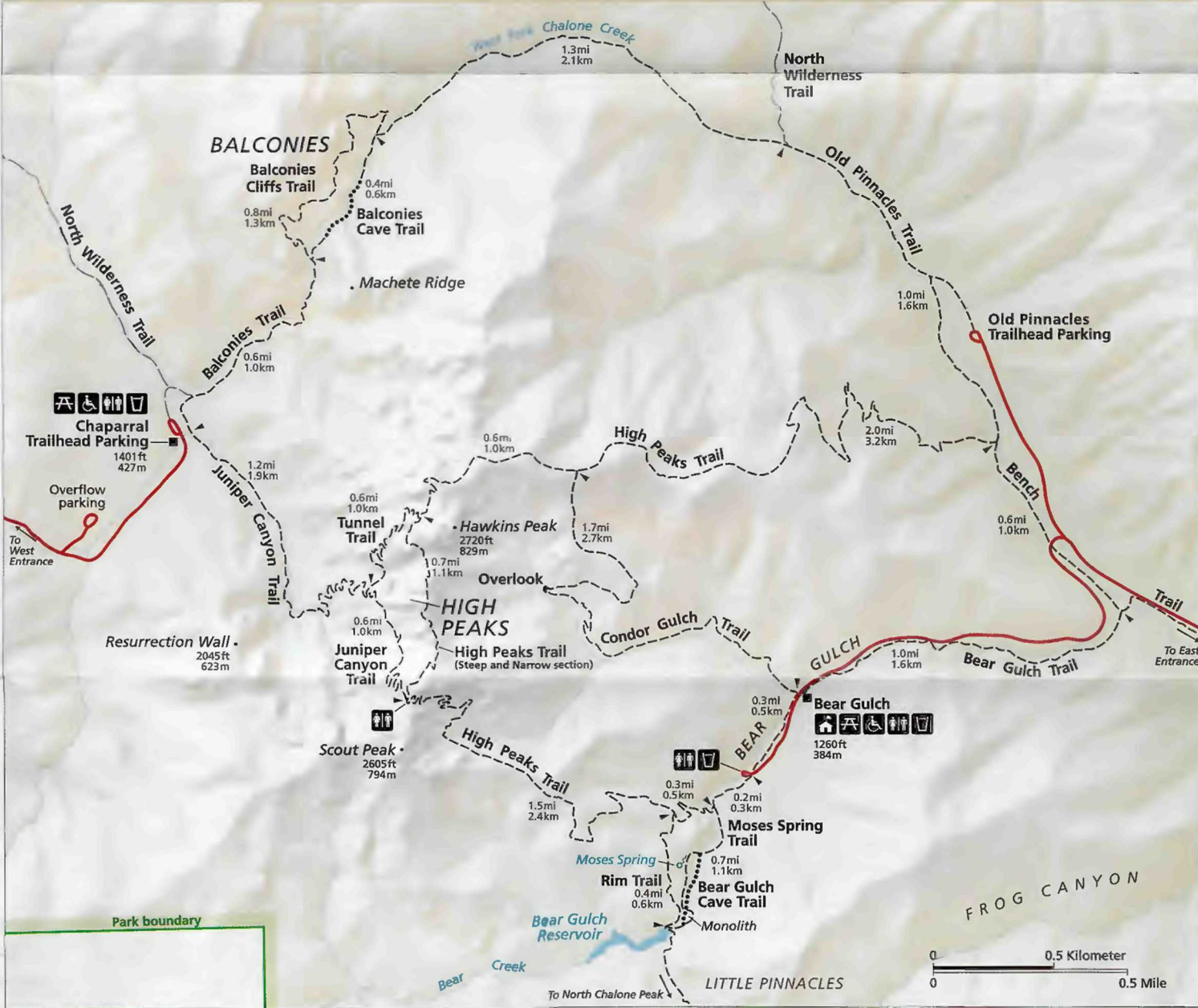
East Side Trails

Pinnacles Visitor Center to Bear Gulch day use area 2.3 miles one way, 1½ hours elevation gain: 300 feet	<i>Moderate</i> Walk along Chalone and Bear creeks from the Pinnacles Visitor Center to the Bear Gulch day use area. Portions of the Bench Trail are accessible to visitors in wheelchairs.
South Wilderness Trail 6.5 miles round trip, 3 to 4 hours no elevation gain	<i>Moderate</i> Follow this unmaintained trail to the park boundary, or simply meander through the magnificent grove of valley oaks. Begin at the campground and follow the Bench Trail to the South Wilderness marker. (See large map at lower left.)
Pinnacles Visitor Center to Balconies Cave 9.4 miles round trip, 3 to 4 hours elevation gain: 300 feet	<i>Moderate</i> Hike along sunny Chalone Creek on the Bench and Old Pinnacles trails to Balconies Cave. On the return trip, cross over the cave via the Balconies Cliffs for views of formations. Flashlight required in cave.
Moses Spring–Rim Trail Loop 2.2-mile loop, 1½ hours elevation gain: 500 feet	<i>Moderate</i> This loop is a good choice for rock formations, talus caves, and the reservoir on a short hike and also a good choice for children. Bear Gulch Cave is open seasonally. Flashlight required in cave.
Condor Gulch–High Peaks Loop 5.3-mile loop, 3 to 5 hours elevation gain: 1,300 feet	<i>Strenuous</i> Walk through the heart of the Pinnacles rock formations, particularly along the Steep and Narrow section of the High Peaks Trail. Add the Rim and Moses Spring trails to extend the loop to 6.1 miles.
High Peaks–Bear Gulch Loop 6.7-mile loop, 4 to 5 hours elevation gain: 1,425 feet	<i>Strenuous</i> Climb into the High Peaks and descend along the ridge through meadows of grasses and, in spring, wildflowers. Return to the Bear Gulch area under the shade of sycamores along the Bear Gulch Trail.
Condor Gulch Trail 1.7 miles one way, 1 to 1½ hours elevation gain: 1,100 feet	<i>Moderate to overlook, strenuous beyond</i> This trail offers spectacular views of the High Peaks, whether you hike just a few minutes or the entire trail. The overlook is one mile up.
Chalone Peak Trail 9 miles round trip, 3 to 5 hours elevation gain: 2,040 feet	<i>Strenuous</i> Climb to the highest point in the park, North Chalone Peak, and be rewarded with views of the surrounding valleys. Continue on an unmaintained trail to South Chalone Peak for a longer hike. (See large map at lower left.)
Old Pinnacles Trail to Balconies Cave 5.3-mile round trip, 4 to 5 hours no elevation gain	<i>Moderate</i> This sunny hike to Balconies Cave also leads to the towering rock formations of Machete Ridge and the Balconies Cliffs. Begin at the Old Pinnacles Trailhead. Flashlight required in cave.
West Side Trails	
Balconies Cliffs–Balconies Cave Loop 2.4-mile loop, 1 to 1½ hours elevation gain: 100 feet	<i>Easy to Moderate</i> This trail through Balconies Cave may require a bit of scrambling through talus passages. Wading may be required in winter. Flashlight required in cave.
Juniper Canyon Loop 4.3-mile loop, 2 to 3 hours elevation gain: 1,215 feet	<i>Strenuous</i> This steep trail climbs along switchbacks to the heart of the High Peaks. At the top, circle through the rock formations along the Steep and Narrow section of the High Peaks Trail and the Tunnel Trail.
North Wilderness Trail Loop 9.3-mile loop, 5 to 8 hours elevation gain: 1,020 feet	<i>Strenuous</i> This unmaintained trail climbs along ridgetops and then descends into the Chalone Creek bed, where it is marked by rock cairns. Return along the Old Pinnacles and Balconies trails.
High Peaks–Balconies Cave Loop 8.4-mile loop, 4 to 5 hours elevation gain: 1,540 feet	<i>Strenuous</i> Begin by climbing into the High Peaks, and the rest of the loop is downhill or flat. Return along the Old Pinnacles and Balconies trails, going over or through the cave. Flashlight required in cave.



Bear Gulch Cave

Detail Map



What You Need To Know

To the East Entrance Take CA 25 to CA 146. Turn west on CA 146 into the park.

East Entrance–Pinnacles Visitor Center The visitor center, at the entrance to the campground, has information, a small bookstore, and exhibits. Staff can help you plan your visit. The visitor center is open year-round 9:30 am to 5 pm. There are picnic tables, restrooms, water, a pay phone, and parking.

Pinnacles Campground The only campground in the park is inside the eastern boundary. NOTE: Camping is prohibited on the west side and outside of this designated campground. The campground offers tent, RV, and group sites; showers; and a store. Call 831-389-4485 for general campground information. For reservations visit www.recreation.gov or call 877-444-6777.

Bear Gulch Bear Gulch has picnicking, trailheads, park headquarters, and Bear Gulch Nature Center. The nature center is open seasonally, as staffing permits. You can watch the park film, get a junior ranger book, and learn about the park's natural and cultural history.

To the West Entrance Take US 101; at Soledad turn east onto CA 146 and follow signs to the park. **WARNING:** The road from Soledad to west Pinnacles is steep and narrow; RVs, trailers, and large vehicles should avoid this entrance.

West Entrance–Chaparral Trailhead Visitor contact station, restrooms, water, parking at trailhead. No phone.

An automatic gate at the west entrance opens each morning at 7:30 am and closes at night. Visitors can leave the park after the gate is closed, but vehicles cannot enter when the gate is shut. This allows for late hiking and climbing.

Lodging, Food, and Gas These are not available in Pinnacles National Park, but they can be found in nearby towns. You are welcome to picnic in the park.

Weather, Heat, and Water Daytime temperatures in summer and early autumn can reach above 100°F. • Hiking steep trails requires energy and results in greater water loss through sweating. • Wear a hat and clothing that provide ventilation and protection from the sun. • Drinking water is available only in developed areas; there is no water along any of the trails. • Carry and drink at least one liter of water per person per hour. • Heat and dehydration can be fatal.

Pets Pets are not allowed on trails. They must be leashed while in parking lots and picnic areas and must be attended at all times. Animals left in vehicles during the heat of the day can quickly die from heat exhaustion.

Safety and Regulations Hiking, caving, and climbing can be fun, but remember—if you get injured, you are a long way from medical help. Cell phones may not work in this remote park. Don't let your guard down when it comes to safety. Be prepared. Please follow these regulations and safety guidelines:

Carry and drink plenty of water • Wear shoes with ankle support and non-slip soles that provide good traction—especially in caves, where the rocks can be slippery. • Carry a proper flashlight for exploring caves. Small lights like penlights and cell phone lights will not guide you safely through a dark, rugged cave. • Watch where you step, sit, or place your hands. Poison oak, stinging nettles, and rattlesnakes are in the park.

Stay on established trails to help prevent erosion. • Green fences indicate restoration work; do not enter these areas. • Bicycles are not permitted on any trails. • Watch for pedestrians and wildlife on roads. • Feeding, approaching, or hunting wildlife is prohibited. • All plants, animals, rocks, and structures in the park are protected by federal law. This includes wildflowers, pine cones, and rocks. They are beautiful, but please leave them for the enjoyment of future visitors. • For firearms regulations, check the park website.

Accessibility We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information go to a visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check our website.

Emergencies contact a ranger or call 911

Plan ahead. Contact the park and check our website for ideas about planning your trip, safety tips and regulations, ranger-led activities, and cave status.

More Information
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www.nps.gov/pinn

National Park Foundation.
Join the park community.
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