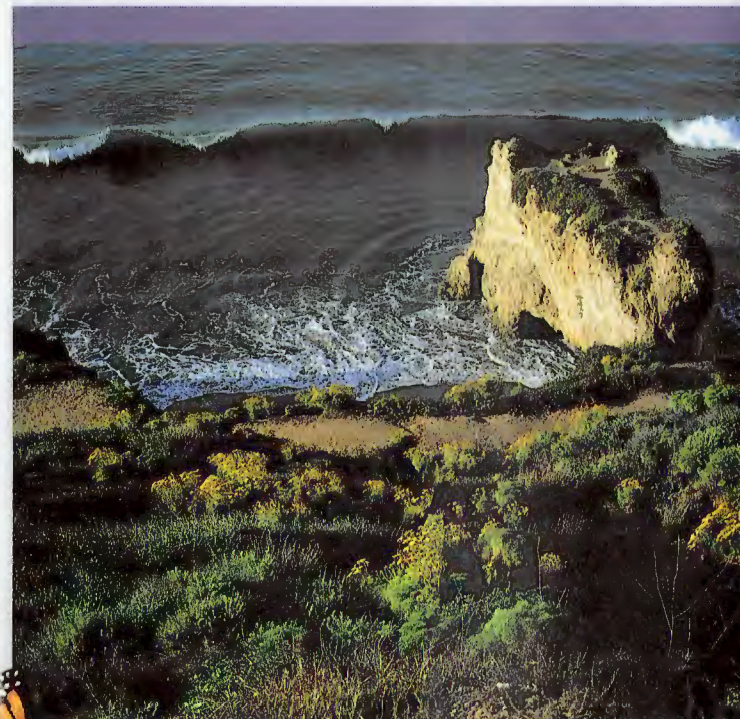


The Santa Monica Mountains rise above Los Angeles, widen to meet the curve of Santa Monica Bay, and reach their highest peaks facing the open ocean. The land is beautiful and diverse. The rugged coastline offers narrow sandy beaches and rocky shores. Dense chaparral and fragrant sages cover the canyon walls. Inland, lone valley oaks accentuate the grassy hillsides. In 1978, Congress established the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area as a part of the National Park System. No single agency can decide alone how to preserve this diverse landscape. Together, government agencies, landowners, and the people who use this land are working to provide places for people to live, work, and play while protecting the mountains and seashore for future generations.



El Matador State Beach



La Jolla Valley wildflowers



Coast live oaks in Malibu Creek State Park

Mediterranean Climate

Hot, dry summers and mild, wet winters characterize the climate of the Santa Monica Mountains. These semiarid conditions, and the mountains' location in a coastal, middle latitude, place the park in what is known as a Mediterranean climate. There are only five such areas in the world.

The climate, range of elevations, and differences in soil create a complex ecosystem within the national recreation area. That this ecosystem even exists, so near the most densely populated urban area in the United States, is remarkable. Protected here are diverse natural communities: coastal strand with dunes and beaches, chaparral, coastal sage

scrub, oak woodlands, valley oak savannah, grasslands, and cool, riparian woodlands found in the bottoms of canyons.

The ocean and mountains offer a sanctuary for an abundant blend of plants and animals. Recorded here are more than 50 species of mammals and 384 species of birds. This haven supports deer, mountain lions, golden eagles, snowy plovers, and great horned owls.

Chaparral, the dominant vegetation, thrives in this climate. The word chaparral comes from *el chaparro*—place of the scrub oak—and refers to the dense, woody, evergreen plant varieties, such as chamise and toyon, that cover the hillsides.



Chumash ap at Satwiwa Natural Area



Adamson House at Malibu Lagoon State Beach



Paramount Ranch movie set

Native American Indians

Native American Indians have lived in this area for thousands of years. Although of different languages and tribes, they lived a similar lifestyle based on the abundant food and materials provided by their environment. They fished in the ocean, hunted rabbits and deer in the canyons, and gathered the acorns from the oak woodlands. Prosperous and industri-

ous, the tribes who inhabited these mountains lived in the center of a network of commerce that extended up and down the coast, west to the Channel Islands, and inland to Arizona. Purple dwarf olive shells (*left*) served as currency. Today we know the descendants of these people as the Chumash in the western and Gabrieliño/Tongva in the eastern portions of the mountains.



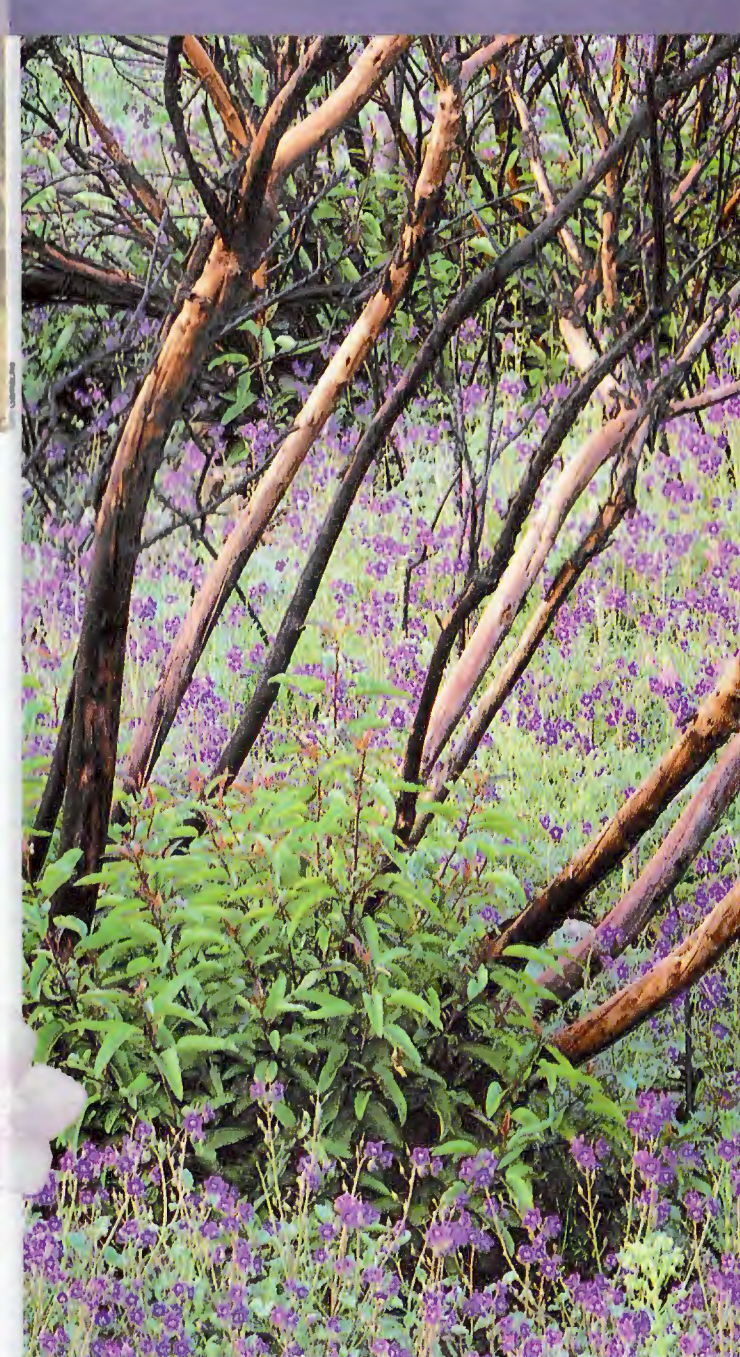
Missions to Ranches

When the Spanish arrived in the 1500s they found the land dotted with native villages that they named *rancherías*. During colonization in the 1700s and early 1800s Franciscans established missions to claim the territory for Spain. Later, Spain granted land called *ranchos* to army veterans to raise cattle. In 1821 California became Mexican territory. Nine years later Mexico enacted a seculariza-

tion policy that shifted power from mission leaders and large *ranchos* and divided the land into smaller ranches. In 1891, Frederick and May Rindge purchased a large parcel of El Rancho Topanga Malibu Sequit for ten dollars an acre as a business investment. The family's resistance to urban development in Malibu produced a legacy of open space for the Santa Monica Mountains.

Filmmaking

Filmmakers have used these mountains as settings for imaginary worlds since the earliest days of Hollywood. Major studios, including Paramount Pictures, owned movie ranches here. Through the camera's eye this landscape has become Wales in *How Green Was My Valley*; Korea in *M*A*S*H*, and Colorado in *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman*. Filming continues in the park.



Phacelia blooms under laurel sumac
Christina Woolch

Life After Fire

All land in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area has burned at least once in the last 100 years. Some areas have burned as many as six times. Fanned by high Santa Ana winds, fire reduces chaparral to charred stumps and ash. As devastating as it seems, periodic fire is important to the natural environment. Without it, vegetation becomes overgrown. When the inevitable fire comes, the results may be uncontrollable and catastrophic—infernos resulting in loss of property and human life.

Chaparral is particularly susceptible to fire because of its thick growth and high concentration of volatile oils. Fire rejuvenates plants by recycling organic matter into nutrient-rich ashes and by cracking open hulls that allow seeds to sprout. Within weeks, even without rain, new growth is born from the scorched earth. Phacelia and laurel sumac (*left*) sprout from ashes and from woody stumps buried in the soil. Species that grow from seeds spring to life with the first rainfall. Fruits and seeds from these plants provide food for small animals. These animals become food for larger animals such as bobcats (*above*). In fewer than 10 years the landscape regains its former appearance, and the cycle continues.



Background photo: Don Wiecho; Monarch butterfly: Dorothy-Michale Novick

Reading the Landscape

The Santa Monica Mountains are young, born from the collision and sliding of the Earth's crustal plates along the San Andreas Fault. The Earth folds and quakes as the plates push against each other, squeezing the land as easily as we crumple a sheet of paper. Throughout the park, rock outcroppings tell the story of the mountains: the rise and fall of ancient

oceans, episodes of volcanic activity, and erosion occurring today.

The Santa Monica Mountains, part of the Transverse Ranges that stretch from the Mojave Desert to the Channel Islands, are about 46 miles long and 8 miles wide. Volcanic Sandstone Peak, at 3,111 feet above sea level, is the park's highest point.



Explore with a ranger



Bird watch at Malibu Lagoon State Beach



Observe cultural artifacts



Camp at Malibu Creek State Park



Ride a horse at Rocky Oaks



Poison Oak

Enjoying the Park

Visitor Center At the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area Visitor Center in Thousand Oaks you will find information, maps, and publications. The visitor center is open daily, except Thanksgiving, December 25, and January 1. Call 805-370-2301.

Satwiwa Native American Indian Culture Center The culture center located at the Rancho Sierra Vista/Satwiwa site has information and exhibits. On Sundays American Indians share their traditions through talks, films, music, and crafts. The center is open weekends. Call the visitor center for a schedule of events.

Hiking There are more than 500 miles of public hiking trails in the park. The Backbone Trail, when complete, will extend about 70 miles, linking major parklands in the mountains.

Horses and Mountain Bikes Trail riding is a popular way to explore the backcountry and the park's varied landscape. Horse rentals are available from privately owned stables. Call the visitor center for information on horse stables, trails, and regulations.

Wildlife Bobcats and cougars live in the park. Thirteen raptor species nest here, including golden eagles. Explore on your

own, or ask about joining a ranger on a nature walk.

Filmmaking Visit Paramount Ranch, where you may see a filmmaking crew at work. Rangers give talks about the filmmaking history in the park and the Western Town set.

Mulholland Scenic Corridor The Mulholland road was built in the 1920s to take Angelenos from the city to the ocean. This route traverses 50 miles of mountain road from Hollywood to the coast.

Camping Camping is available by reservation at Point Mugu and Malibu Creek State

Parks, and Leo Carrillo State Park. Call 800-444-7275. Camping is available on a first-come, first-served basis at Circle X Ranch. Call the visitor center for information about family and group facilities.

State Parks For information about activities, services, reservations, permits, and regulations, call 818-880-0350.

Accessibility Most facilities and services are accessible to visitors with disabilities. Call for information.

Park Neighbors The park is a mosaic of homes, communities, recreational facilities, and

federal, state, county, and community parklands. Please respect private property.

Events Calendar A free quarterly calendar, *Outdoors*, describes activities, programs, and special events. It includes a map, directions, and phone numbers. Write to the park or get one at the visitor center.

More Information Write: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, 401 West Hillcrest Drive, Thousand Oaks, CA 91360. Call 805-370-2301. Internet: www.nps.gov/samo.

For a Safe Visit

Pets Pets are required to be on a leash at all times. They are not permitted on trails in many park areas. Call for information.

Fire Fire is a constant danger. Camp and cooking fires are permitted only in designated areas in campgrounds. Wood fires are not permitted at Malibu Creek State Park and Circle X Ranch.

Trails Motorized vehicles are prohibited on all trails and fire roads. Mountain bikes and horses are permitted only on designated trails and fire roads. Stay on trails to protect park resources and prevent erosion.

Safe Driving Obey speed limits. Mountain roads are narrow and winding. Reduce your speed on curves.

Fishing A California fishing license is required; all state and federal regulations apply. Do not fish within 50 feet of swimmers or surfers.

Nature's Hazards Poison oak grows in shaded areas; watch for its clusters of three shiny leaves. Rattlesnakes strike if disturbed or surprised; do not put your hands or feet into hidden places. Insects can be annoying; use a repellent, wear light-colored clothing, and check for ticks. Avoid sunburn;

wear a hat and use sunscreen. Water in streams and lakes is not safe to drink. ALWAYS carry plenty of fresh water.

Other Parklands Regulations differ among the parklands managed by federal, state, and local agencies. It is your responsibility to know park regulations.

Protect the Park All natural and cultural resources, including wildflowers, rocks, fossils, and wildlife are protected by federal law. NEVER remove, disturb, or damage cultural artifacts, plants, or animals.

In an emergency, call 911.

A Guide to the Parklands

Activities and services in the parklands are provided by federal, state, and local agencies and by private organizations. Depending on the timing of your visit you may find additional activities, such as guided walks or festivals. Recreational equipment may be available in local communities or near the park sites. Many areas require permits or charge fees, including entrance or parking fees at state parks.

Plan Ahead: Call or write the parks before your visit. Contact the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area Visitor Center for phone numbers and for information about special events, guided walks, and activities. Call 805-370-2301.

	Bike	Hike	Camp	History	Permits	Horse	Mountain Biking	Public Areas	Programs	Self-guiding	Tours	Swimming	Visitor Nature Ctr
Castro Crest													
Charmlee Natural Area													
Cheeseboro/Palo Comado Canyons													
Circle X Ranch													
Cold Creek Preserve													
Franklin Canyon													
Laurel Canyon Park													
Leo Carrillo State Park													
Malibu Creek State Park													
Malibu Lagoon State Beach													
Paramount Ranch													
Peter Strauss Ranch													
Point Mugu State Park													
Rancho Sierra Vista/Satwiwa													
Rocky Oaks													
Solstice Canyon													
Stunt Ranch													
Temescal Gateway Park													
Topanga State Park													
Will Rogers State Historic Park													
Zuma Beach County Park													
Zuma/Trancas Canyons													

©GPO: 1998-454-767/80445 Reprint 1999 Printed on recycled paper

