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.

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER
Governor
MIKE CHRISMAN
Secretary for Resources
RUTH COLEMAN
Director, California State Parks

California State Parks does not discriminate against individuals with disabilities. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at the phone number below. To receive this publication in an alternate format, write to the Communications Office at the following address.

CALIFORNIA
STATE PARKS
P. O. Box 942896
Sacramento, CA
94296-0001

For information call:
800-777-0369
916-653-6995, outside the U.S.
711, TTY relay service

www.parks.ca.gov

Palomar Mountain State Park
Post Office Box 175
Palomar Mountain, CA 92060
(760) 742-3462 or (760) 765-0755

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The beautiful forest and mountain meadows of Palomar Mountain State Park are in northern San Diego County on the west side of Palomar Mountain. Large pine, fir and cedar trees make the park one of the few areas in southern California with a Sierra Nevada-like atmosphere. Elevation within the park averages 5,000 feet above sea level, making evenings cool even during the summer. A number of vista points offer sweeping panoramic views both westerly toward the ocean and inland toward the desert.

From Highway 76, either of two roads can be used to reach the park. The one from Rincon Springs (County Road 56) is scenic but rather steep and winding. County Road 57 from Lake Henshaw is longer but its steep grade makes it more suitable for heavily loaded vehicles and those pulling trailers. To the east, beyond the limits of the park, is the world-famous Palomar Observatory and the highest point of the 6,100-foot mountain. Many park visitors make the eight-mile trip up the road to the observatory, which is operated by the California Institute of Technology. The observatory is open to the public free of charge from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily.

HISTORY

Deep, well-bored bedrock mortars and metates in Doane Valley are reminders of those many centuries when Luiseño Indians maintained seasonal villages, hunted game and gathered acorns and other seed crops here on the slopes of Palomar Mountain. The village sites and ten smaller, temporary camps or gathering stations have been identified within the present-day park. At least two separate groups of Luiseños are known to have established exclusive territories on the mountain. The area around Boucher Lodge was called Tsal. In the mid-19th century, the old road from Pauma Valley is named in his honor. The area around Boucher Lodge was called Paisv. Other areas were known as Chakuli, Malava and Ashakawako. These areas were used during the summer and early autumn for hunting and gathering acorns, pine seeds, elderberries and grass seeds. The main Luiseño village at the foot of the mountain was called Pauma.

Sturdy conical houses known as wikups or kechumbat were made of pine poles covered with bark. Semi-subterranean “sweat houses” were centrally located in the village and used for purification and curing rituals. Handcrafted products included clay jars, woven baskets, throwing sticks, nets for fishing or carrying, bows and arrows and a variety of utensils for cooking and eating.

The Luiseños called this mountainous area Wavamai, but when the Spaniards arrived in the 19th century, they named it Palomar, or “place of the pigeons,” a reference to the thousands of band-tailed pigeons that nested in the area.

In 1798 Mission San Luis Rey was established four miles upstream from the mouth of the San Luis Rey River. Pines and firs from Palomar Mountain were used in its construction. An outpost, or assistencia, was established at Pala in 1616. Father Antonio Peyti, the Franciscan missionary, Mission San Luis Rey from 1798 to 1832, spent several weeks each year working with the Indians who lived in or near what is now Palomar Mountain State Park. He was persuasive and soon came to be greatly loved, but the mission way of life both here and elsewhere in California had some terrible effects on the Luiseños. The sudden and complete disruption of age-old living patterns, as well as the introduction of European diseases, quickly resulted in a severe decline in the population. The mission was closed down in 1834 when Governor Figueroa issued direct orders to “secularize” all of the California missions. Today many descendants of the mission period Luiseños live on nearby reservations and continue to follow the Catholic religion though they also maintain some of their earlier cultural and religious beliefs and practices.

In 1846 the slopes of Palomar Mountain were included, at least theoretically, in the famous Warner Ranch. In 1851, however, the Indians sold the range to the Warner Brothers. The property was sold again in 1873 when the Smiley Brothers bought it. Then in 1890, the property was sold to the San Diego and North County Railroad Company. The 1896 sale was made to the Lake Geneva Land and Water Company. In 1911 the property was purchased by the City of San Diego. Then, in 1917, the land was purchased by the state and the park was opened.

In 1946 the land was purchased by the state and the park was opened. The park contains one of the largest stands of pine trees in southern California. The present-day park was established in 1951.

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drew Warner off the land. For a time thereafter, cattle and horse thieves used the remote mountain meadows of Palomar to shelter their stolen animals until it was safe to take them across the border into Mexico.

Nathan Harrison, a black slave who came to California during the gold rush, took up residence as a free man near the eastern edge of the present park in the 1850s. He grew hay and raised hogs in Doane Valley despite frequent trouble with bears and mountain lions. At this time of his death in 1920, he was said to be 101 years old. The old road from Pauma Valley is named in his honor.

George Edwin Doane came into the area in the early 1880s and built a shake-roof log cabin in the little clearing between Upper and Lower Doane Valley in what is now the Doane Valley Campground. Doane grew hay and raised cattle and hogs on his 640 acres of meadowland, and some of this land is still under pasture today. During the southern California land boom of the 1880s and afterward, many other people also settled on Palomar Mountain. Four apple orchards within the park date from this period, as do the remains of Scott’s cabin on Thunder Ridge. Palomar Mountain State Park was created during the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

The most commonly seen wildlife in the park includes southern mule deer, western gray squirrels, raccoons and striped skunks. Predators such as gray foxes, coyotes, bobcats and even mountain lions are also present, but are not often seen. Doane Pond is stocked with trout and also contains bluegill, bullhead and channel catfish.

The quarter-mile Doane Valley Nature Trail provides a good opportunity to become familiar with many of this area’s most common trees and shrubs. During the summer guided nature walks and campfire programs also provide opportunities to learn more about the cultural and natural history of this area. For further information about the interpretive programs, contact the park staff.

Some 40 inches of rainfall each year supports a wonderful forest on the slopes of Palomar Mountain, including big cone Douglas fir, white fir, incense cedar, live oak, black oak,oulter pine and yellow pine. Flowering trees and shrubs include western dogwood, azalea and wild lilac (both purple and white), with juncus grass, gold-ened, lupine, buttercups and penstemons in the meadow areas.

The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to protect our state’s most valued natural and historical resources, and to provide for high-quality outdoor recreation.

HISTORY

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Doane Pond is open year round and is stocked with trout. Fishing is especially good during the winter, spring and early summer. Fishing is not permitted at night. A valid California fishing license is required.

There is also informal picnicking near the pond, with several tables and grills, a restroom and a parking lot. Fishing hours are from 6:00 a.m. to sunset.

CAMPsite RESERVATIONS

Campsites can be reserved up to seven months in advance of arrival by calling 1-800-444-7275. Visa®, MasterCard® and Discover® are accepted. From outside the USA, call (916) 638-5883. Persons with hearing impairments can call the TDD number: 1-800-274-7775.

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The three-quarter-mile Doane Valley Nature Trail provides a good opportunity to become familiar with many of this area’s most common trees and shrubs. During the summer guided nature walks and campfire programs also provide opportunities to learn more about the cultural and natural history of this area. For further information about the interpretive programs, contact the park staff.

CAMPING

There are 31 campsites in the Doane Valley Campground, three of which have accessible features. Each site has a table and fire ring. Piped drinking water is available. The campground also has restrooms with flush toilets and hot showers.

Picnicking

Fishing

TRAILS

A variety of hiking trails is available within the park. Some lend themselves to short, leisurely walks, and others are suitable for vigorous, all-day hikes. The scenery includes open meadows and thick coniferous or oak forests. Trails are open to foot traffic only. Dogs and mountain bikes are not allowed on trails.

DoGS

Dogs must be kept on leash at all times (six-foot maximum length) and are not permitted on trails. They are permitted on the Myers Fire Road as far as the park boundary. They must be kept in your tent or vehicle at night.

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