

Human impact on the land is dwarfed in comparison to the influences of nature, time and the San Andreas Fault, which lies directly beneath the 12-mile length of Tomales Bay.

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

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Tomales Bay State Park
Star Route
Inverness, CA 94937
(415)669-1140

Tomales Bay

State Park



Situated on the eastern edge of Point Reyes Peninsula,

the blue waters and sheltered coves of Tomales Bay State Park are a popular destination for a day of picnicking, hiking or water-oriented activities. The beaches and east-facing slopes of this 2,000-acre park are especially attractive because they are protected from the prevailing winds by the high backbone of the Point Reyes Peninsula. The park is located 40 miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge, close to Inverness and Point Reyes Station and the Point Reyes National Seashore. The weather varies greatly. Dress in layers, and be prepared for wind and cool, damp weather.

CULTURAL HISTORY

For more than 5,000 years, the Coast Miwok lived in what is now Marin and Sonoma counties. Abundant food, a moderate climate and the closeness to the sea provided a comfortable life centered on the tasks of gathering food, hunting, and catching salmon and shellfish.



Reconstructed Miwok bark houses

In 1579 Sir Francis Drake laid claim to the entire area for England, naming it Nova Albion (New England). Nearly 25 years later, Spanish explorer Don Sebastian Vizcaino named the rocky headlands La Punta de Los Tres Reyes, after the day of the Feast of the Three Kings.

Most of the Tomales Bay area lay untouched until the late 1940s, when developers discovered its beauty and began to purchase beachfront lands. Local residents, fearing that the beaches would be closed to public use, formed a committee to help secure the land for park purposes. The Marin Conservation League, various conservation and civic organizations, and the State purchased portions of the area. On November 8, 1952, Tomales Bay State Park was dedicated and opened to the public.

NATURAL HISTORY

Nature, time and the San Andreas Fault—directly beneath the 12-mile length of Tomales Bay—have had enormous impact on the land. Point Reyes Peninsula is separated from the continent by this great rift in the earth's crust. Its granite bedrock is unlike any of the nearby formations. The nearest granite on the east face of the fault matching that of Point Reyes Peninsula is in the Tehachapi



Overlook view from picnic area

Mountains, more than 300 miles southeast. Incredibly, movement of two inches per year over ten million years is sufficient to have caused the granite to travel that distance. In the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, the greatest measured displacement along the entire fault was at Tomales Bay, when the area to the west moved an amazing 20 feet.

PLANT COMMUNITIES

Trails take the hiker through a lush wilderness of forests, beaches, fields, hills, meadows and marshes, each with its own plant life. Among the most prominent trees are bishop pines, madrones, California laurels, oaks, red and white alders, willows and buckeye.



Live Oak

One of the finest remaining virgin stands of bishop pine is preserved in the Jepson Memorial Grove. Belonging to a group of “closed-cone” pines—a species that has survived by adapting to the hard realities of wildfire—the tightly sealed, prickly cones retain their seeds until opened by heat. The seeds are dispersed only when the pines are burned or the cones subjected to extreme heat.

Ferns line the beaches and grace the wooded areas. Wildflowers brighten the countryside with splashes of vivid color during the spring.

WILDLIFE

Wildlife thrives here.

Foxes, raccoons, badgers, weasels, chipmunks, squirrels, rabbits, deer, bobcats, skunks, wood rats, field mice, moles

and other animals inhabit the area.

Numerous species of land and sea birds, including the rare spotted owl, attract ornithologists and birdwatchers. Several varieties of clams, jellyfish, crabs and other small sea animals live on or near the beaches, and the bay is home to sharks, rays and many other kinds of fish.



RECREATION AND EDUCATION

Water Activities

Four gently sloping, surf-free beaches on the shore of Tomales Bay offer many opportunities for picnicking, swimming, hiking, clamming, kayaking and boating. Heart’s Desire Beach has drinking water, a picnic area with fireplaces, dressing rooms and flush toilets. Less-developed Pebble, Shell and Indian Beaches can be accessed by way of gentle trails. The shoreline has shallow areas suitable for wading and water play. There are no boat-launching facilities, but hand-carried boats may be put in the water. Boaters are welcome to land on the beaches provided they stay clear of the well-marked swimming areas. Lifeguard services are not available. Heart’s Desire Beach is used as a put-in and put-out location by both individuals and local companies offering organized kayaking excursions. Dogs are not permitted on beaches, trails, or in the nature area of the park.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- **Hiking**—Hiking trails connect the park’s four beaches and go through the Jepson Memorial Grove. The trail between Heart’s Desire and Indian Beaches has a self-guided nature tour.



- **Interpretive programs**—Indian Beach, about one-half mile north of Heart’s Desire Beach at the end of the nature trail, is the site of the park’s interpretive programs on the Miwok. On the beach two reconstructed Miwok bark shelters stand upright, forming tall cones.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES &

Heart’s Desire Beach is the most accessible portion of the park, with a flat route from the parking lot to the restroom and picnic facilities. Call prior to arrival for specific details.

NEARBY PARKS

- Samuel P. Taylor State Park, 15 miles west of San Rafael (415) 488-9897
- Point Reyes National Seashore (415) 464-5100

This park is supported in part through a nonprofit organization. For more information contact: Marin State Park Association (Tomales Bay State Park) Route 1, Box 244, San Rafael, CA 94901

Tomales Bay State Park

to Tomales
Marconi Conference Center
State Historic Park



Dogs are not permitted on beaches or trails and must be on a leash at all times.



Legend

	Major road		Gate		Picnic Area
	Paved road		Nature Trail		Ranger Station
	Unpaved road		Parking		Restrooms
	Trail		Telephone		
	State Park				
	National Seashore				

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