

Discover the state's history

## **Walking Through History In California State Parks**

California State Parks offer the chance for visitors to walk through history in guided – and self-guided tours. Special living history events bring the past to life as volunteers, docents and staff in costume demonstrate what California life was like long ago.

Here are some examples:

**Angel Island State Park**, located in San Francisco Bay, is accessible by private boat or public ferry from Tiburon and San Francisco. A five mile island perimeter road takes visitors past more than 100 historic military structures ranging in age from the Civil War to the Cold War as well as the site of a Marine Quarantine Station and a U.S. Immigration Station. Additional hiking trails cross the island and a spectacular 360 degree view of the entire Bay Area is available for the top of Mt. Livermore. A concession operated tram audio tour is available daily May through September and less often in March and April. Bicycles are welcome on the perimeter road. Foot traffic only on trails. Dogs are not permitted on Angel Island except for Service Animals. For ferry, tram, cafe, bicycle, and other information, check [www.angelisland.com](http://www.angelisland.com), [www.angelislandferry.com](http://www.angelislandferry.com), and [www.blueandgoldfleet.com](http://www.blueandgoldfleet.com). General information can be found at [www.angelisland.org](http://www.angelisland.org) and at [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov). Detailed telephone information is available by calling the park at (415) 435-1915.

**Bodie State Historic Park**, a ghost town in a state of “arrested decay” 13 miles east of Highway 395 on Bodie Road, was known to have “the wildest streets of any western mining town, the wickedest men, and the worst climate out of doors.” The miners and mule team drivers, prostitutes and preachers, merchants, drunks and opium addicts all contributed to the colorful life of this once bustling mining camp. The boom years of 1877 to 1881 are long past and two disastrous fires have reduced Bodie to a fraction of its original size. But the whistling of the wind through the deserted streets, the sound of metal and loose board rattling against the weather beaten buildings, the sight of a discarded bed or dress remind visitors of the “ghosts” that once lived in this high desert town. Visitors will not find tourist shops, restaurants, amusement rides or fake shoot-outs in Bodie. It is a place where visitors from around the world come to experience “life in the past lane.” Bodie in summertime offers guided tours of the Standard Stamp Mill, history talks, video presentations, a brochure (available in English, French or German) which guides visitors to each of the buildings in town and a fine museum. There are also special photographer’s workshops and events. Bodie in wintertime offers lots of snow. Times and schedules vary with

the season and staffing levels. Please call the park at (760) 647-6446 for more information.

The **California State Indian Museum**, located in Sacramento at 2618 "K" Street on the same park grounds as Sutter's Fort State Historic Park, contains exhibits and artifacts that tell the history and show the material cultures of the large and incredibly diverse indigenous population that occupied California before Euro-Americans. The museum has displays for the different geographic populations of California Indians from the desert, to the ocean, valley, and mountains. There are hands-on exhibits for school children and a video room that shows a 12 minute feature about the Indians of California. There are also special displays about "Ishi," the last surviving member of the Yahi tribe; and the devastation the "Gold Rush" brought to the indigenous people of California. The museum works closely with continuing California Indian Cultures. The museum is open 362 days a year. For hours, fees, and information about special events, please call (916) 324-0971.

**Donner Memorial State Park**, located at the east end of Donner Lake in Truckee, is designated as a National Historic Landmark. Central to the park is the Pioneer Monument, a memorial to the Donner Party tragedy. Twenty years in the making, it was finally dedicated in 1918 to all of the emigrants who made the westward trek. The site became a California State Park in 1928 when the Native Sons of the Golden West donated the Monument plus 15.1 acres of land. The park continues to grow with recent acquisitions of land in Coldstream Valley and Schallenberger Ridge. The Emigrant Trail Museum located in the park is open all year and features a video presentation depicting the tragic story of the Donner Party who were trapped at the site by an early winter in 1846-47 while trying to reach California. The exhibit hall displays articles used by the Donner Party, including a rifle used to shoot an 800-pound grizzly bear. Other displays include Washoe basketry, tales of the mountain men, and the story of the building of the trans-continental railroad through Donner Pass. The McGlashan Butterfly Collection is on display in the auditorium. During the summer, interpretive programs such as Junior Rangers, campfire programs and history walks are scheduled weekly. For more information call (530) 582-7892.

**Empire Mine State Historic Park**, 10791 E. Empire Street in Grass Valley, offers visitors a chance to explore the site of California's richest hard rock gold mine. Visitors can stroll through 106 years of hard rock mining operations at this 805-acre park. 13.5 acres of landscaped gardens and grounds surround the 1898 mansion "cottage" built by mine owner William Bourn using granite waste rock from the mine. Guests can peer into the main Empire mine shaft and explore historic buildings that housed the day-to-day operations of the mine such as the machine shop, blacksmith shop, and mine manager's offices. A "Walking Trails" brochure is available for exploration of the scenic backcountry trails. The Visitor Center is open daily May through August, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and

September through April, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tours are offered daily throughout the year. Contact the park at (530) 273-8522 for tour times and information.

The **Governor's Mansion State Historic Park**, at 16<sup>th</sup> and H Streets in downtown Sacramento, offers a unique and personal history of California. Thirteen of the state's chief executives and their families lived in the mansion. Governor George Pardee moved into the mansion in 1903 and twelve Governors would occupy the mansion with the last being Ronald Reagan. The mansion was built in 1877 for Albert Gallatin, a partner in Sacramento's Huntington-Hopkins hardware store. The state bought the house in 1903 from Joseph Steffens, a private citizen, for \$32,000. Not only is the structure the place where California governors and their families lived but also a place where history was made. One of the most unusual aspects of the museum is that it is not a replica or a restoration. It stands as it did when it was vacated by the Reagans in 1967. Visitors can see furnishings and personal items purchased by each family during their stay. The interior design and furnishings feature marble fireplaces from Italy, handcrafted hinges and doorknobs from the Victorian era, elaborate moldings and gold-framed mirrors from Europe. The Governor's Mansion State Historic Park is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. Guided tours are offered every hour from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. To arrange guided tours of the mansion, please call Reserve America toll free (866) 240-4655. For hours, fees, and information about special events, please call (916) 323-3047.

**Monterey State Historic Park** features historic buildings and exhibits scattered throughout downtown Monterey recalling the time when the town was the old capital of Spanish and Mexican "Alta California". State Park guides lead a 45-minute walking tour focusing on California history during the Spanish, Mexican, and American eras. The tour includes California's oldest government building, the Custom House, as well as the Old Whaling Station, California's "first" brick house and "first" theatre, as well as other buildings that reflect some of the economic, cultural and political changes taking place in California during the years of 1821 to 1850. Tour times and days are Monday, Friday, and Saturday at 10:30 a.m. and Wednesday at 11:30 a.m. Visitors should meet at the Pacific House Museum (also a part of Monterey State Historic Park.) The tour is free, but limited to 15 people on a first-come, first-serve basis. For more information call (831) 649-7118.

**Santa Cruz Mission State Historic Park**, near downtown Santa Cruz on School Street, gives visitors the opportunity to stroll through the only original building left of the Santa Cruz Mission, and the only original Indian worker housing left for any of the California Missions. This remarkable adobe was a private family home until 1983, and was then fully restored to the original outside appearance. The inside of this seven-room treasure is a museum chronicling the lives of the original California Indian inhabitants, and is just down the street from the replica church commemorating Santa Cruz Mission. Two picnic areas and full

accessibility make this a great place to visit. Open Thursday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Guided tours are available on Sunday at 1 p.m. or by appointment. Call (831) 425-5849 for more information.

**Shasta State Historic Park**, six miles west of Redding on Highway 299, offers the remnants of a once bustling Gold Rush town from the 1800's. Visitors can pick up a self-guided tour map and at their own pace, explore the remaining brick buildings, 1870's merchandise store, bakery with wood-fired oven, cemeteries, a stagecoach and farm equipment and a pioneer barn from the era. A picnic area that includes California's first rest stop provides a break for the travel weary. For those interested in a more formal presentation, the Courthouse Museum – a restored Shasta County Seat of Government building from 1862 – displays artifacts representing Shasta's history. Included inside the museum are the popular gallows and old jail cells, as well as a fine collection of California paintings dating from 1850 to 1950. Although the public is invited to walk the outside trails daily, the formal exhibits are open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call the park at (530) 243-8194.

**Sutter's Fort State Historic Park**, 2701 "L" Street in downtown Sacramento (approximately one mile east of the State Capitol), features Captain John A. Sutter's restored 1839 fort. As visitors stroll through the landscaped park grounds, ominous cannon stare down from tall bastions and more cannon poke their muzzles from behind embrasures in the whitewashed walls. Imposing oak gates topped by sharpened spikes guard the entrance to Sutter's Fort, "the Citadel on the Sacramento." Through the gates visitors go back through time, back to a California before the Gold Rush and Statehood; when John Sutter's Fort stood between the ebbing Spanish mission/rancho culture on the west, and the rising wave of ambitious American emigrants coming from the east. John Sutter and his Fort were at a crossroads of colliding cultures and politics. His fort was a stronghold on the frontier, a foothold for American expansion, and became the name most associated with the "Gold Rush." The Fort is now preserved as a State Historical Park and museum open to the public 362 days a year. The California State Indian Museum is on the same park grounds as Sutter's Fort. For hours of operation, fees, and special event information please call (916) 445-4422.

**Weaverville Joss House State Historic Park**, 50 miles west of Redding on Highway 299 in the town of Weaverville, is the oldest continually-used Chinese temple in California. The original temple, built in 1874, was destroyed by fire and was replaced by gold miners with the present one. Inside the building are ornately carved wooden canopies containing colorful images of gods along the back wall, and in front of them is an altar holding candles, incense sticks, oracle fortune sticks, and brilliant tapestries. Guided tours are held on the hour Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Entrance to the beautifully landscaped grounds, complete with fish pond, and visitor center are free. For more information call (530) 623-5284.

**Wilder Ranch State Park**, two miles north of Santa Cruz off Highway One, features a self-guided tour and weekend guided tours of the historic dairy ranch complex. The tour includes the restored 1897 Melvin and Letty Wilder Queen Anne Victorian home, an equally ornate 1891 carriage horse barn, the c. 1860 dairy barn with hand-hewn post-and-beam construction, and – best of all – the restored and operable 1896 machine shop driven by a pelton water wheel. The Wilders were a very modern, innovative family who adopted many of the new inventions developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. For more information, call the park at (831) 426-0505.

**Will Rogers State Historic Park**, in Pacific Palisades at 1501 Will Rogers State Park Road, is currently undergoing a major restoration. The Ranch House is closed to house tours until at least January 2006. Please call beforehand to find out the status of the restoration of the historic ranch prior to visiting if you hope to see the ranch house. In lieu of house tours, the staff at Will Rogers State Historic Park is resuming their popular ranch tours. These entertaining and informative ranch tours introduce the ranch life of Will Rogers and his family and give a glimpse into the fascinating detective work being used to restore the historic buildings. The ranch tours are Tuesdays through Saturdays at 11 a.m., 1 p.m., and 2 p.m. The park is open everyday from 8 a.m. to sunset. There is a \$7 parking fee. The park is 15 miles west of Los Angeles Civic Center. Take Sunset Boulevard west from the San Diego Freeway (I-405) six miles to Will Rogers State Park Road and turn right. Continue one mile to the park entrance. Detailed telephone information with important updates is available by calling the park at (310) 454-8212.

For other history-related sites, “Heritage Adventures – Another California Escape” is a series of four brochures, which include maps linking state parks and other historic sites and museums related to a special theme. These California history trips include: "In the Interest of Time: 350 years of San Diego History in 35 miles;" "Harvesting the Hills: Hydraulic Mining and the Quest for Gold" in the vicinity of Nevada City; "In the Footsteps of the 49ers to the Southern Mines" from Gilroy to Columbia; and "California's Wandering Capital" from Monterey, San Jose, Vallejo and Benecia to Sacramento. For more information, call 916-777-0369.

Visit California State Parks on-line at [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)

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