

Sunset Manresa State Beaches



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.



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Discover the many states of California.™

Sunset and Manresa State Beaches

201 Sunset Beach Road

Watsonville, CA 95076

831-763-7062

*Monterey Bay offers
a chance to watch dolphins,
sea otters and gray whales.
Shore birds, whitetailed
kites, western snowy plovers
and red-tailed hawks make
Sunset and Manresa
their home.*



A peaceful campground under the pines,

picnicking on the beach, and unmatched views of Monterey Bay make Sunset State Beach a favorite year-round destination. Manresa State Beach rewards visitors with sweeping views of bluff-backed sand and sea, with the Santa Cruz Mountains to the northwest and the forested hills of the Monterey Peninsula to the southwest. Sunset and Manresa state beaches are approximately one mile apart off Highway 1.



Walk-in campsites at Manresa State Beach

AREA HISTORY

Long before the arrival of Europeans, the Ohlone lived along the coast between San Francisco Bay and Monterey Bay. They traded mussel and abalone shells, as well as dried abalone and salt for piñon nuts and obsidian. They also hunted small game, elk, deer and an occasional bear. Sea mammals were a food source, and streams supplied

salmon and trout. However, the mission padres forever changed the lives of the Ohlone by bringing them into the mission. The effect on their culture and traditions was disastrous, and their numbers were nearly decimated by European diseases to which they had no immunity.

From the 1830s to the 1870s, Ranchos San Andreas and Bolsa del Pajaro encompassed the area. In 1852 John H. Watson claimed a half interest in Rancho Bolsa del Pajaro to build the town of Watsonville. His claim was overruled eight years later, but the town continued to grow. Pajaro Landing, built in 1868, became a major produce shipping point before Southern Pacific took over freight conveyance in the 1880s. In 1903 lumber dealer W. J. Rogers built Port Watsonville to provide steamship service to San Francisco, but in 1913 the port went bankrupt.

Leslie A. Kester bought the land in 1919 and in 1938 sold it to dairy farmer William Van Laanen. In 1983 Mrs. Van Laanen sold eight acres to be added to 159 acres the State had acquired in 1931 for Sunset State Beach. The Van Laanen farm complex near the entrance station includes a redwood frame farmhouse dating from the early 1900s. With increased private development in the area, residents concerned about a loss of public access to the beach became the driving force behind public ownership of this sensitive resource.

NATURAL HISTORY

Sunset State Beach supports four major plant communities and associated wildlife.

- **Coastal scrub**—Mock heather, bush lupine, beach sagewort, Monterey and robust spineflower, coyote brush, poison oak, sand gilia and seaside woolly sunflower cover the sandy slopes and dunes. Wildlife includes brush rabbits, dusky-footed wood rats, western fence lizards and pacific gopher snakes. Song sparrows, rufous-sided towhees, American kestrels, red-tailed hawks and Anna's hummingbirds are common.
- **Coastal woodlands**—Introduced Monterey pine, Bishop pine, and Monterey cypress are dominant. They support an understory of coyote brush and sea fig that shelters California pocket mice, pinyon mice, chestnut-backed chickadees and Steller's jays. Eucalyptus trees are a gathering place for monarch butterflies.
- **Dune mat/Coastal strand**—Park managers are replacing the habitat-destroying European dune grass with native beach bur, sand verbena and beach sagewort to attract white-crowned sparrows, California towhees, and dark-eyed juncos. The mouth of the Pajaro River shelters California brown pelicans, Caspian, elegant and royal terns, and California gulls. Deer mice and brush rabbits live in low dune vegetation. Reptiles include black legless lizards, northern alligator lizards and coast garter snakes.
- **Marshlands**—The coast gum plant, pickleweed and coastal salt grass of salt marsh areas attract cinnamon teals, savannah sparrows, meadow mice and raccoons.

The willow, California bulrush and broad leaf cattail in the wetlands at the mouth of the Pajaro River provide food and habitat for cinnamon teals, mallards, American bitterns, red wing blackbirds and long-billed marsh wrens.

Manresa State Beach supports two major plant communities and associated wildlife.

- **Coastal scrub**—Coyote brush, coastal sagebrush and lizardtail grow on the bluff. Allen's hummingbirds, lesser goldfinches, house finches, white-crowned sparrows, rufous-sided towhees and brush rabbits occupy the bluff and its understory.
- **Coastal strand**—Sea rocket, sand verbena and beach primrose occupy intertidal and offshore environments, sheltering sand crabs and beach hoppers. Jellyfish and other organic material support sanderlings, whimbrels, willets, western and Heermann's gulls, and surf scoter. Sea mammals include California gray whales, occasional dolphins and sea otters.

Western snowy plovers use both beaches and their foredune areas for nesting, rearing of young, and winter habitat. This bird builds its nest directly on the beach sands. Disturbing a posted plover nesting area is a violation of federal law.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Contact the park for information on the Junior Ranger Program, nature hikes and campfire programs.

- **Camping**—Sunset has 90 shady, dune-protected family sites without hookups that can accommodate recreational



Raccoon

vehicles up to 31 feet. Parking for the 64 walk-in tent sites at Manresa Uplands is in a separate lot near the campground (no RVs permitted). Reservations are recommended from early spring through October. Call (800) 444-7275 up to seven months in advance. Pets must not be left unattended at any time.

- **Fishing**—Starry flounder, California halibut, barred surf perch, striped bass and surf smelt can be caught at Manresa. At Sunset surf perch, sardines and occasional striped bass are caught. A sport fishing license is required.
- **Picnicking**—To reserve two large ramadas for special events at Sunset State Beach, call (831) 429-2857. At Manresa picnic tables along the top of the bluff offer panoramic ocean views.
- **Glider port**—Remote control glider enthusiasts will find a glider port at Sunset State Beach.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

- Restrooms in the beach day-use area
 - Campsites at both parks
- Accessibility is continually being improved. Call the park for the latest information.

PLEASE REMEMBER

- At Manresa dangerous rip currents, cold water temperatures, and deep offshore holes make surfing and swimming hazardous activities for any but the most experienced surfers.
- It is illegal to remove or harm plants, animals or other natural features.
- Park hours: 8:00 a.m. to 1/2 hour after sunset. Campground quiet hours: 10:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. Generator quiet hours: 10:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m.
- The speed limit is 15 mph. Watch out for children, pedestrians and bicycles.
- Do not feed or leave food out for wildlife.
- Alcohol is not permitted on the beach or in the day-use area.
- Fires must be confined to a fire ring and attended at all times.
- Wood gathering is not permitted. Purchase firewood at the entrance station or from the camp host.
- Dogs are not permitted on Sunset Beach but are allowed in the campgrounds. Check with staff for areas open to dogs.

NEARBY STATE PARKS

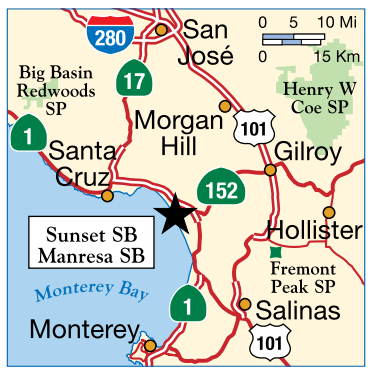
- Seacliff State Beach, 5 1/2 miles south of Santa Cruz (831) 685-6500, 429-2850
- The Forest of Nisene Marks, 6 miles south of Santa Cruz (831) 429-2850, 763-7062
- Zmudowski State Beach, one mile north of Moss Landing (831) 384-7695, 649-2836
- Moss Landing State Beach, in Moss Landing (831) 384-7695, 649-2836



This park receives support in part through a non-profit organization. For information contact: Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks, 144 School Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 (831) 429-1840 www.thatsmypark.org.

Sunset & Manresa State Beaches

MANRESA STATE BEACH



MANRESA UPLANDS

Legend

- Paved road
- Unpaved road
- Trail
- Beach Stairs
- Beach Area
- Accessible Feature
- Campfire Center
- Campground
- Hike/Bike Campground
- Group Campground
- Locked Gate
- Parking
- Picnic Area
- Ranger Station
- Restrooms
- Showers
- Telephone
- Viewpoint



0 0.5 1 Mile
0 0.5 1 1.5 Kilometers

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SUNSET STATE BEACH



0 250 500 ft
0 50 100 150 m