

Mount Tamalpais State Park



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.



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

Discover the many states of California.™

Mt. Tamalpais State Park

801 Panoramic Highway

Mill Valley, CA 94941

(415) 388-2070

*The panorama from
the 2,571-foot peak
is breathtaking. On a clear day,
view the Farallon Islands
25 miles out to sea, the Marin
County hills, San Francisco
and the bay, and the hills
and cities of the East Bay
and Mount Diablo.*

N

North of San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, Mount Tamalpais State Park rises majestically from the heart of Marin County.

It captures our attention with its sweeping hillsides cloaked with chaparral-covered ridges, grasslands and oak woodlands. Deep canyons filled with solemn redwood groves intersect these ridges and slopes to create a diverse environment for a wide array of plant and animal species.

The breathtaking panorama from the 2,571-foot peak includes the Farallon Islands 25 miles out to sea, the Marin County hills, the San Francisco Bay, the hills and cities of the East Bay and Mount Diablo.

Spring and summer temperatures are warm, with average highs in the 70s and 80s. Fall and winter can be cool, with temperatures in the 50s. Fog is common, so layered clothing is recommended for all seasons.

CULTURAL HISTORY

Native People

The Coast Miwok Indians lived on or near Mount Tamalpais for thousands of years before Europeans arrived, inhabiting areas near water sources throughout present-day Marin County. These California Indians hunted

Lupine

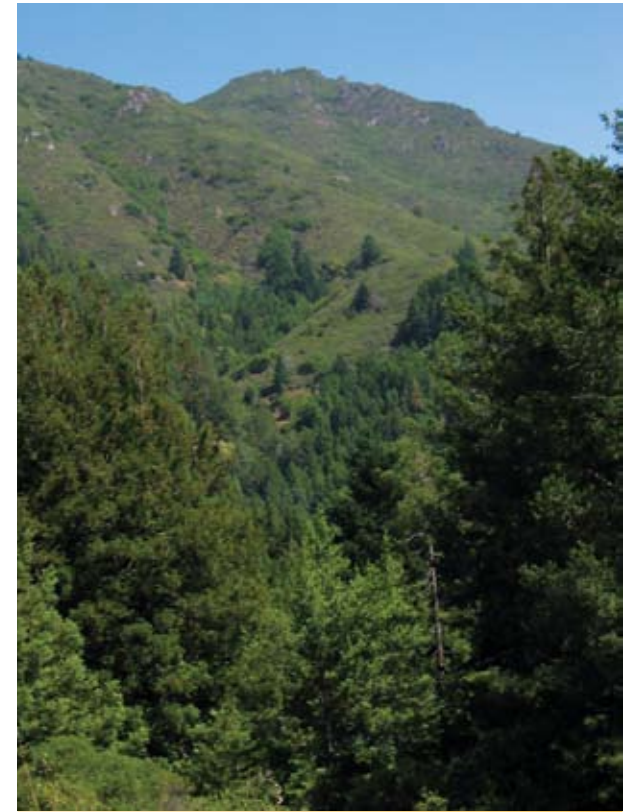
small animals and deer, collected acorns, and gathered flora, marsh plants, and shellfish. They made baskets and disk beads from clamshells, trading them for locally unobtainable resources, such as high-grade obsidian from Lake County tribes. The Coast Miwok had a rich culture that included basketry, dances and ceremonies, and a complex and intricate language. Their way of life changed soon after the arrival of Europeans, however.

In 1770 two explorers, Captain Pedro Fages and Father Juan Crespí, named the mountain *La Sierra de Nuestro Padre de San Francisco*. This was later changed to the Miwok word *tamalpais* (tam-al-pie-us), which roughly translated means “bay mountain” or “coast mountain.”

Mount Tamalpais Scenic Railway

Residents of San Francisco, whose population exploded after the 1848 gold discovery, used Mount Tamalpais for recreational purposes. Trails were developed, and a wagon road was built to the top of the mountain in 1884.

The Mount Tamalpais Scenic Railway, completed in 1896, carried visitors to the scenic mountaintop and the Summit Tavern, a hotel and restaurant. The slope from Mill Valley to the summit was so steep that the railroad had to negotiate 281 curves, equivalent to 42 complete circles, earning it the title of “Crookedest Railroad in the World.” In the section known as the “Double Bow Knot,” the track paralleled itself five times within 200 yards. In 1907 a gravity car line was designed to transport visitors from the top of the mountain to the redwood-filled canyon of Muir Woods.



View of Mt. Tam's East Peak

Requiring only gravity and a brake, special open-air cars carried passengers down the mountain to Muir Woods at an exhilarating 12 mph. The addition of the gravity cars allowed sightseers to travel from Mill Valley to the summit, down to Muir Woods, and then back to Mill Valley.

The Scenic Railway and its famous gravity cars remained popular until the advent of the automobile and the construction of Ridgecrest Boulevard in 1922. A replica of a gravity car can be viewed at the barn on East Peak.

Conservation Efforts

Over the years millions of people have flocked to the mountain, affectionately called "Mount Tam," to relish the spectacular views while hiking on its many trails. Successive generations of Mount Tam enthusiasts have worked hard to protect the mountain and keep it open to the public. The oldest of these citizen groups is the Tamalpais Conservation Club, organized in 1912. In 1928 William Kent, an ardent Marin County conservationist, and his wife donated 200 acres of land in Steep Ravine to help create Mount Tamalpais State Park. The park was later enlarged through the efforts of a number of hiking clubs led by the Tamalpais Conservation Club. These organizations orchestrated a grassroots campaign to purchase additional state park land.

THE STATE PARK TODAY

Now one of the oldest and most popular units of the California State Park System, the park has grown to 6,300 acres. Completely surrounding Muir Woods National Monument, the park is bordered by Marin Municipal Water District land on the north and by the Golden Gate National Recreation Area on the northwest and south.

NATURAL HISTORY

Geology

Many people think the 2,571-foot peak is the remnant of an extinct volcano. However, geologists believe that Mount Tamalpais

was created due to its location near the San Andreas Fault, one of the world's most active faults. Over millions of years, the mountain has risen from the earth's crust, while erosion has left only solid rock exposed in the highest peaks and ridges.

Common rock types in the area are sandstone (graywacke), shale, greenstone, chert, quartz tourmaline, and the easily-identified green serpentine, the official state rock of California.

Plant Life

The varied topography and soils of Mount Tamalpais support a tremendous diversity of plant life. More than 750 plant species can be found within the park. Hikers pass through open grassland, chaparral and oak-covered knolls, or descend through dense stands of Douglas fir and California laurel into deep, fern- and redwood-filled canyons.

In spring the slopes of Mount Tamalpais come alive with the vibrant colors of wildflowers. Hillsides are sprinkled with California poppies, lupines, Douglas irises, goldfields and shooting stars. Spotted coralroot, fetid adder's tongue and Pacific trillium are among the plants that hide in the deep shade of the forest.

Animal Life

Raccoons, gray foxes, squirrels, bobcats, coyotes, herds of black-tailed deer and an

occasional mountain lion can sometimes be seen roaming the mountain slopes. Bears and elk once wandered the land, but vanished as a result of hunting and ranching before the park was established.

Birdwatchers can view more than 150 species of birds within or very near the park. Red-tailed hawks, northern harriers and turkey vultures are frequently seen soaring over the open grasslands by day, while the sounds of great horned, spotted barn and screech owls occupy the night. The hollow drilling of pileated, acorn, and hairy woodpeckers adds to the forest sounds. Along the coastline, there are numerous oceanic and intertidal birds to identify.



Red-tailed Hawk

RECREATION

Hiking

Hikers can enjoy more than 50 miles of trails within the park that connect to a 200-mile trail system traversing land managed by the Marin Municipal Water District and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

Day-Use Areas

Bootjack Picnic Area, on the Panoramic Highway a quarter-mile northeast of Pantoll, has tables, stoves, piped drinking water and flush toilets. It accommodates up to 50 people.

East Peak summit has picnic tables, an accessible restroom, a visitor center staffed on weekends, and a refreshment stand open intermittently during the summer.



Spectacular views of the San Francisco Bay area from the Verna Dunshee Trail near the East Peak. The trail is mostly wheelchair accessible.

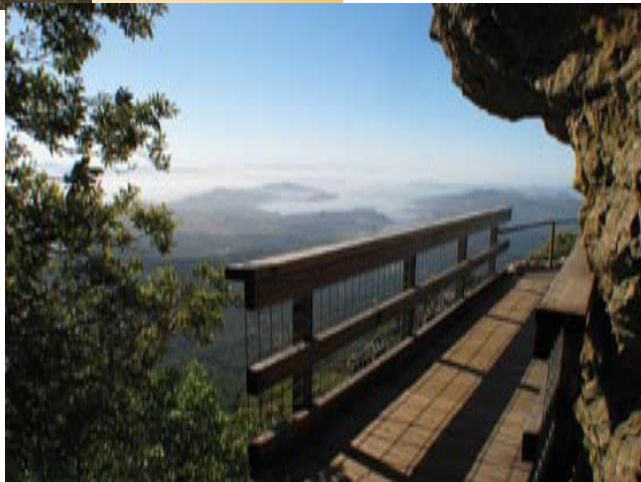
Mountain Theater

The Mountain Theater, officially the Cushing Memorial Amphitheatre, was constructed out of natural stone by the Civilian Conservation Corps

in the 1930s. It holds 3,750 people and can be reserved for special events. Each spring since 1913, the Mountain Play theatrical company has presented outdoor productions of Broadway musicals. For information on the Mountain Theater and its performances, contact the Mountain Play Association at (415) 383-1100.

Camping

Several campgrounds are open all year. Pantoll Campground, on the Panoramic Highway, has 16 family sites about 100 yards from the parking area. Phones, drinking water,



firewood and restrooms with flush toilets are nearby. There are no showers. Campsites are available first-come, first-served.

Rocky Point-Steep Ravine Environmental Campground, on a marine terrace one mile south of Stinson Beach, has seven primitive sites and nine rustic cabins. Each cabin has a small wood stove, picnic table, sleeping platforms and an outdoor barbecue, but no running water. Primitive toilets and water

faucets are nearby. Reservations for this campground are highly recommended.

The Alice Eastwood Group Camp entrance gate, located on the Panoramic Highway near the Mountain Home Inn, has two sites for organized groups of 25 to 50. Both camps have tables, barbecue grills

and a large area for tents.

Frank Valley Group Horse Camp, on Muir Woods Road about one mile north of Highway 1 at Muir Beach, has tables, fire rings, piped drinking water, pit toilets, two horse troughs and corrals for up to 12 horses. Reservations must be made at least 48 hours in advance.

Call (800) 444-7275 for campground reservation information.

INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS

Supported by the Mount Tamalpais Interpretive Association, most interpretive

programs are conducted by volunteer docents. The visitor center offers displays and merchandise.

Free guided hikes are available on weekends. Moonlight hikes, Wednesday Night hikes and various special event hikes are offered seasonally. For more information and schedules, go to www.mttam.net.

Free astronomy programs are offered at the Mountain Theater on Saturday evenings from April through October. Families can enjoy multimedia programs on astronomy and the space sciences. Following each program, members of the San Francisco Amateur Astronomers make telescopes available.

ACCESSIBILITY

- The accessible Verna Dunshee Trail at East Peak offers fantastic views of the bay. Two accessible tables, accessible restrooms, pay phones and drinking fountains are located near the access points of this half-mile loop trail. Accessible parking is near the picnic area by the trailhead. Routes of travel between the restroom, parking and picnic area are accessible.
- The Mountain Theater has a wheelchair platform on the right side of the theater. For further information, contact the Pantoll Ranger Station at (415) 388-3215.
- The Mountain Play offers signed performances and descriptive services. American Sign Language interpretation is provided during the first three performances each season. Please call the Mountain Play Association at (415) 383-1100 for dates and reservations.
- Cabin #1 at Steep Ravine is accessible.

PLEASE REMEMBER

- Camping and fires are permitted in designated areas only.
- Observe park hours, as they vary by season.
- Dogs are not allowed on trails, fire roads, or in undeveloped areas. Dogs are permitted on leash in the picnic areas and campgrounds, except Rocky Point-Steep Ravine Environmental Campground.
- Horses are allowed only on fire roads and designated (posted) hiking trails.
- When hiking, lock your car and take your valuables with you.
- Learn to identify poison oak. Be alert for rattlesnakes and mountain lions.
- All park resources are protected by law.



Spotted Coralroot

NEARBY STATE PARKS

Angel Island State Park

In San Francisco Bay.

Ferries from Tiburon/Vallejo/San Francisco.

(415) 897-0715

China Camp State Park

Four miles east of San Rafael on San Pedro Road.

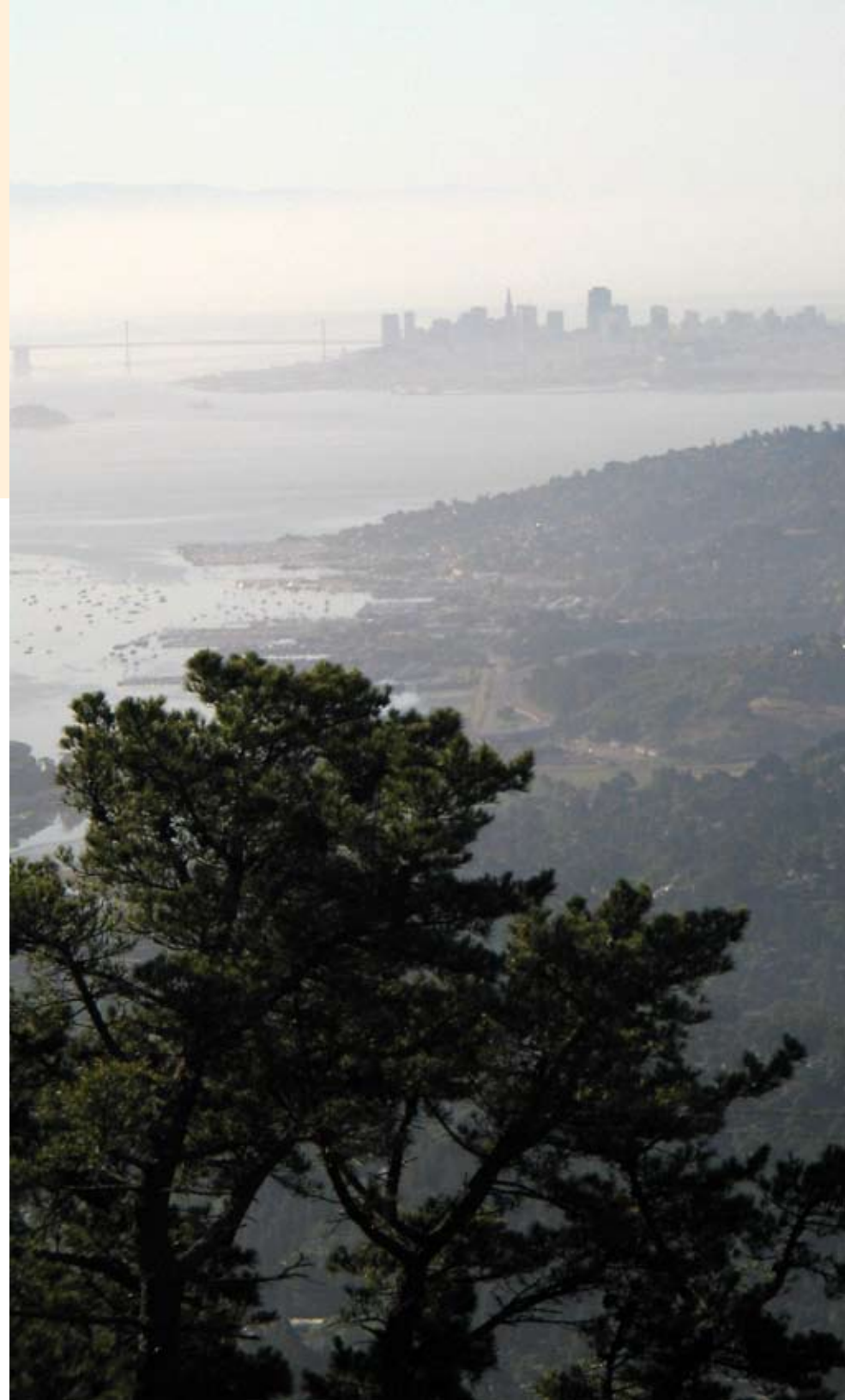
(415) 456-0766

Samuel P. Taylor State Park

15 miles west of San Rafael on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard.

(415) 488-9897

This park is supported in part through the
Mt. Tamalpais Interpretive Association
P. O. Box 3318, San Rafael, CA 94912
(415) 258-2410 • www.mttam.net



Mount Tamalpais State Park



Legend

- Major Road
- Paved Road
- Fire Road: Hiking, Horse and Bicycle
- Trail: Hiking
- Trail: Hiking and Horse
- Trail: Hiking, Horse and Bicycle
- Accessible Feature
- Campground
- Drinking Water
- Environmental Campground
- Group Campground
- Horse Campground
- Locked Gate
- Parking
- Picnic Area
- Ranger Station
- Restrooms
- Spring
- Telephone

