

## OFF THE SHORE

The California gray whales' southern migration begins in mid-December and continues through February. The best viewing is usually in January. Gray whales have been seen as late as May. The best location for viewing is the end of the Headlands Trail.

Molera is in the middle of a sea otter refuge area. Otters prefer to eat, rest and groom their thick fur while floating on "rafts" of kelp in quiet lagoons where they are safe. The Headlands Trail provides an area where you can occasionally see otter. Harbor seals and California sea lions can be seen sunning themselves on rocks or occasionally swimming in the surf line. Look for shiny black or gray mottled forms on the protected rocks, occasionally raising their heads to avoid a wave.

## THINGS TO KNOW . . .

### SLEEPER WAVES

Every year many people on the central coast drown when they are washed off rocks and carried out to sea. Don't assume the water cannot reach you. Beware of seemingly gentle waves. Children are especially vulnerable. Be cautious and have respect for the ocean.

### VALUABLES?

Although there is little problem with theft at Molera, visitors are advised to be careful. Store money, jewelry, and other valuables securely. Do not leave ice chests, lanterns, stoves and other equipment outside unattended.

### FOOD STORAGE

Raccoons and other wildlife can be dangerous to your health. They are wild and may bite or claw you. Do not touch or hand-feed animals. Food should be suspended in a bag, from a tree, away from your sleeping area or locked in your vehicle.

### IS IT ALL RIGHT TO CAMP ON THE BEACH?

Camping is permitted only in the trail camp. By establishing one camping area, the trail camp, we can maintain restrooms, collect trash, allow safe fires and provide effective security. At high tide waves reach the base of the bluffs, so for your protection as well as that of the park, please **DO NOT CAMP ON THE BEACH.**

### HOW AND WHERE DO I CAMP?

If you arrive by car, park in the unpaved lot. Walk to the north end of the parking lot and follow the trail (½ mile) to the trail camp. The trail camp is a small clearing in the meadow within the "No Camping Beyond This Point" signs (A. S. Lewis Collection). There is a picnic table and collected trash bins. Fees are \$5 per person and \$1.00 per dog. Campers may stay 3 nights, and must vacate for 7 nights before returning to the camping in or near the parking lot or in a vehicle is not permitted.

## WHY DOES A DOG HAVE TO BE ON A LEASH?

Dogs were among the first wild animals to be domesticated. They have remained popular with people because of their loyalty and service to their masters. However, in their protective attitude towards their masters, dogs can pose a threat to other park visitors. The presence or scent of dogs in the park often discourages the more timid wildlife from inhabiting areas that normally provide homes. Dogs are predators and most have retained the natural instinct to pursue wildlife. Your cooperation is necessary if the park is to maintain the natural condition that makes this one of the unique wild areas in the state. For these reasons dogs must be controlled on a leash at all times.

### WHERE CAN I GET WOOD?

Visitors are permitted to collect up to 50 pounds of driftwood from the beach. Wood may be purchased at the park or at any of the stores along Highway One. To reduce human impact on the environment, dead and downed twigs, branches, and logs in other areas of the park are protected. As this wood decays it restores the soil's nutrients, helping other plants to survive.

### WHERE CAN I FISH?

Ocean fishing is permitted year round at the beach. The river is open for Steelhead fishing from approximately November to February, on certain days. **CHECK YOUR FISHING REGULATIONS FOR EXACT DAYS AND DATES.** Remember, everyone over 16 years of age or older must have a license for all types of fishing.

### CAN I HAVE A FIRE?

Fires are permitted only in the stove provided. Thousands of acres in California are destroyed every year by accidental fires. Fires on the beach or trail areas can throw sparks and ignite nearby vegetation, or leave an unsightly pit for other visitors. Most parts of Molera are inaccessible to fire trucks, therefore the park would suffer serious damage if a wildfire were to start.

### CAN I WALK ON THE BEACH AFTER DARK?

Many of the animals of Molera are nocturnal, therefore most active at night. Human (and canine) noise and scents will gradually force the more fragile species to move away. In order to allow these animals to hunt, feed, drink and care for their young undisturbed, all areas except the trail camp close at sunset.

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Drawings courtesy of Erika Perloff and Kim Palmer

# Andrew Molera State Park



Contact the Park for  
Current Camping  
Information  
(831) 667-2315

Andrew Molera State Park is located 22 miles south of Carmel on Highway One. Facilities include 15 miles of hiking trails, an unpaved parking lot with a small picnic area, and a primitive walk-in trail camp. Water and toilet facilities are available. The park ascends from a 2½ mile ocean-front beach to the Big Sur River, grassland and redwood forests. Access to trails is available from the parking lot or any of the gates along Highway One.



Before the arrival of settlers, the Big Sur coast was inhabited by a small group of native Americans, the Esselen Indians. Although very little is known about them, it is thought they may have lived here for 1,000 years and had several small villages.

Rancho El Sur (The South Ranch) was originally granted to Juan Bautista Alvarado by the Mexican government in 1834. Alvarado later became governor of California. Rancho El Sur was comprised of 8,949 acres from Cooper Point to the Little Sur River.

Captain Cooper (John Rogers Cooper) was born in England and came to America in about 1800. He learned the shipping trade and eventually bought and captained his own ship. After a successful voyage to China, Captain Cooper landed in Monterey. He sold his ship, but remained a captain and made several voyages for the new owners. At the same time he began acquiring extensive land holdings. In 1840 he traded his land in the Salinas Valley for Rancho El Sur.

Captain Cooper had 6 children. After Cooper's death in 1872 his eldest son, Juan Bautista Henry Cooper, took over the ranch and operated it until his death in 1899. Rancho El Sur was then divided among the remaining children of Captain Cooper: Encarnación Cooper, Anna María Guadalupe Cooper, who later married Herman Wohler, and Guadalupe Francisca Amelia Cooper, who had married Eusebius J. Molera in 1875.

Eusebius Molera was the son of an eminent Spanish family in Catalonia, Spain. He became an engineer in 1867, came to this country in 1871, and was appointed an officer in the Lighthouse Engineers. During this period he made maps of the Sacramento and Columbia Rivers and supervised the construction of lighthouses along the coast of California. Eusebius and Guadalupe had two children, Andrew and Frances. Eusebius Molera operated the ranch from 1899 until his death in 1932.

The ranch was left to his daughter, Frances Molera. His son Andrew died in 1931 at the age of 54. Frances Molera sold the property to the Nature Conservancy in 1968 on the condition that it not be developed, and that it be named after her brother Andrew. Andrew Molera was famous for his large size, gracious hospitality and the wagonloads of Monterey Jack cheese he sent to the Monterey Market. Andrew Molera State Park has been open to the public since 1972.

#### WILDFLOWERS AND REDWOODS

Andrew Molera includes several plant communities. Because of the wet salt air, low daytime temperatures and foggy days, the vegetation along the coast is quite different from other areas of the park. Near the ocean you will find plants such as sea fig, sand-verbena, silverwood and beach primrose. Where the bluffs and gulches of the marine terrace provide more protection you may find seaside painted cups, sea lettuce, beach sagewort, and coast eriogonum.

As you walk through the meadows and grasslands, you will see wild oats, foxtail and many different types of grasses, mustard and poppies. A great deal of this area was cleared for cattle grazing before it became a state park so the original plant covering is unknown. Skirting the meadows you will find coastal scrub plants like coffee berry, bush lupine, poison hemlock and ceanothus mixed with manzanita and coyote bush.

As you move up the slopes into the evergreen forest, madrone, coast live oak, canyon oak, and even ponderosa pine may be seen alongside the massive coast redwood. The more damp and sheltered areas beneath the redwoods provide a suitable environment for Douglas iris, thimbleberry, blackberry, redwood sorrel, wake-robin, many varieties of ferns and, of course, poison oak.

Finally, the streambank of the Big Sur River produces yet another plant community where you will find tulle and rusch, elks clover, horsetail, red alder, sycamore, cottonwood, and several varieties of willow.

Andrew Molera State Park is maintained in its natural state, inviting an abundance of wildlife. Although many of the animals are nocturnal, it is not unusual to see blacktail deer, bobcat, raccoon, and gray fox in the daytime. Mountain lion and coyote are rarely seen. The most controversial animal is the wild pig. The European wild boar was brought to the Carmel Valley as a new game species for hunters in the early 1900s, and adapted to the rugged terrain easily. While it is an exciting game species, it does dig up the ground with its snout while rooting for food.

At the beach you will see many species of birds, the most common is the western gull. The black and white bird with the long bill, looking for food in the sand is a willit. On the steep rock off Molera Point is a good place to see cormorants. They are all black with a very long neck. The western grebe is also a very distinctive bird with its black back, white chest and red eyes. Other birds commonly seen at Andrews include the 3 foot tall great blue heron, and the dipper or water ouzel that walks under water looking for food. The belted kingfisher is easily recognized by the white ring around its neck. Birds of prey include the black shouldered kite, red tailed hawk, barn owl, Coopers hawk, and great horned owl. (A complete birdlist is available from any park employee.)



Snakes play an important role in maintaining a balance among the animals of Molera. There are gopher snakes, king snakes, Monterey ring-necked snakes, aquatic garter snakes, rosy boas, rattlesnakes and racers. If you are lucky enough to see a snake, PLEASE leave it alone. As with all wild animals: if you don't bother it, it won't bother you.

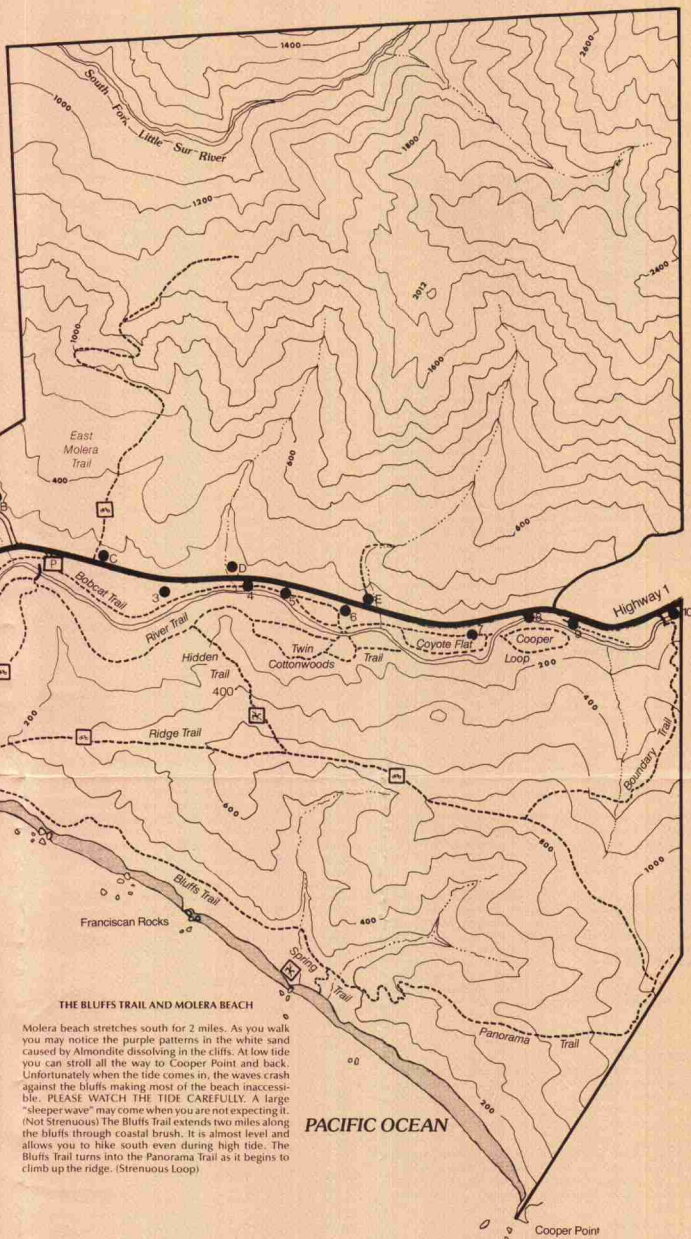
Andrew Molera State Park  
c/o Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park #1  
Big Sur, California 93920

## EAST MOLERA

East of Highway One lies the majority of Molera's 4,800 acres. Experienced hikers will enjoy walking up the steep path through what was formerly cattle grazing land. At the top of the first ridge is as small redwood grove. For more ambitious hikers, an animal path continues to Molera's southern boundary.

## BIG SUR RIVER TRAIL SYSTEM

Heavily forested with stands of Redwood and Oak trees, the trails upstream from the parking lot include: River Trail, Bobcat Trail, Twin Cottonwoods Trail, and Cooper Loop. The forest floor is covered with a lush carpet of ferns and redwood sored. Near the river is a good place to see a variety of birds and animals, have a picnic, or take a cool dip in the river. These trails are accessible either from the parking lot or any of the gates along Highway One. The level of the river changes with rainfall, so watch the current when crossing. (Moderately Strenuous) From the River Trail the Hidden and South Boundary Trails climb to the crest of the ridge and join the Ridge Trail. (Strenuous)



## THE BEACH TRAIL AND HEADLANDS TRAIL

If a flat, easy walk to the beach is what you are looking for, follow the trail/route road through Trail Camp, past the historic Cooper Cabin, and on to the river mouth and beach. Deer, bear, and other animals are often seen on this one mile walk. The beach is most accessible during the summer months when footbridges at the parking lot and river mouth are in place. Just before the river mouth is the Headlands Trail which will take you out to Molera Point. The view of Molera Beach is truly spectacular. You may see otters, seals, sea lions and a variety of birds nesting on the rocks. (Not Strenuous)

## THE BLUFFS TRAIL AND MOLERA BEACH

Molera beach stretches south for 2 miles. As you walk you may notice the purple patterns in the white sand caused by Almondite dissolving in the cliffs. At low tide you can stroll all the way to Cooper Point and back. Unfortunately when the tide comes in, the waves crash against the bluffs making most of the beach inaccessible. PLEASE WATCH THE TIDE CAREFULLY. A large "sleeper wave" may come when you are not expecting it. (Not Strenuous) The Bluffs Trail extends two miles along the bluffs through coastal brush. It is almost level and allows you to hike south even during high tide. The Bluffs Trail turns into the Panorama Trail as it begins to climb up the ridge. (Strenuous Loop)

## PACIFIC OCEAN

## Warning

Poison oak, found throughout the park, has an oily substance on its leaves and stems and a juice that is highly irritating to the skin. Note carefully the shape of the leaves, which turn from a shiny green in the spring to rich orange and red in the fall.

## RIDGE TRAIL AND PANORAMA TRAIL

This trail/route road follows the top of the ridge from the bluffs to the south boundary of the park. (2 miles with a 1200 foot elevation gain) The Ridge Trail, while primarily in grassland, does go through a beautiful oak forest and the view of the Big Sur coastline is spectacular. From the Ridge Trail you can take the Hidden or South Boundary Trails down to the river trails. As you reach the highest point, the Ridge Trail will turn down the Panorama Trail. As the name implies the trail has a panoramic view of the coastline and will take you to the Bluffs Trail. (Strenuous)

This park is a natural area for ticks. Please check yourself and others in your party for ticks. If you find any embedded ticks, seek immediate first aid and medical attention.

## Remember . . .

- Mountain bicycles are permitted only on the Beach, the Ridge Trail, and trails to the Beach via Trail Camp and Creamery Meadow. Please extend trail courtesy to all you meet.
- Horses are not allowed on the Hidden, Headlands, nor Spring Trails, nor in the Trail Camp Area.
- Horse Rides are available by calling the Molera Trail Rides, at (408) 625-8664.

- Trail Camp
- Trails
- Walk-in Gates
- Intermittent Streams
- Seasonal Footbridges
- Parking Lot
- No Horses on Trail
- Trail Permitting Bicycles

