If we in the Congress do not act, the majestic area where sea and bay and land meet in a glorious symphony of nature will be doomed.


For city dwellers, it’s not always easy to experience national parks without traveling long distances. A new idea emerged in the early 1970s: Why not bring parks to the people? In 1972 Congress added two urban expanses to the National Park System: Golden Gate National Recreation Area in the San Francisco Bay area and its eastern counterpart Gateway National Recreation Area in New York and New Jersey.

At nearly 81,000 acres, Golden Gate National Recreation Area is the nation’s largest national park unit in an urban setting. It extends well north and south of San Francisco (see map at right). Along with other public lands and waters in the region, it is recognized by the United Nations as Golden Gate Biosphere Reserve. Offshore, Gulf of the Farallones and Monterey Bay national marine sanctuaries protect ocean habitat and many threatened and endangered species, while allowing for compatible human uses. The national recreation area’s role as the Bay Area’s backyard continues to evolve in ways its early proponents never imagined. Renewable energy powers public buildings and transportation. People of all abilities use accessible trails and other facilities, engaging in activities that promote health and wellness. Volunteers do everything from conducting tours to helping restore native habitat.

Come here for the natural cathedral of coast redwoods at Muir Woods or to experience for yourself the harsh conditions on Alcatraz Island. But don’t overlook the out-of-the-way places to savor the scents of bay laurel and sage, cool morning fog, waves crashing on the headlands, or a tapestry of native spring wildflowers. Golden Gate National Recreation Area invites you to enjoy, explore, and find your own way to experience the parks at the Golden Gate.

GOLDEN GATE BY THE NUMBERS
81,000 acres of parklands
36,000 park volunteers
29,000 yearly raptor sightings
10,000 years of history
758 historic structures
140 miles of trails
78 shipwrecks
35 threatened or endangered species
12 sand beaches
3 lighthouses
1 Golden Gate
Countless ways to discover

GOLDEN GATE
National Recreation Area
California
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Experience Your Parks

WHERE TO BEGIN

Golden Gate National Recreation Area includes Alcatraz, Fort Point National Historic Site, Muir Woods National Monument, and dozens more natural and historic places (see map or both sides of this brochure). These area visitor information centers are located at the Presidio Visitor Information Center, Golden Gate Bridge Parklands, Land’s End, Muir Woods, Muir Woods National Monument, Pacifica, and Presidio.

Information and schedules are available on disc or at www.nps.gov. For a calendar of events and interactive trip planning map, go to www.nps.gov/conserve.org.

Alcatraz: Reservations highly recommended—415-927-2233 or www.alcatrazreservations.com. Tickets leave from Pier 33 (see map at right). Be advised that America the Beautiful Pass does not cover ferry rides.

Left Crissy Field, Alcatraz in background.

HIGHLIGHTS FOR TWO HOURS OR LESS

• Spot whales at Mori Beach Overlook during their winter migration (December–February).
• Tour the Cold War-era Nike Missile Site in the Marin Headlands.
• Scan the sky for migratory birds of prey (raptors) soaring above Marin Headlands on Week End (in July).
• Touch the historic 16-inch gun at Battery Townsley in Marin Headlands.
• Watch the sunset over the ocean at Cliff House.
• Look for red-legged frogs in ponds at Mori Point.

MORE THINGS TO KNOW

For a Safe Visit (Federal laws protect all natural and cultural features in the park. Please enjoy things in their natural habitat and leave them unaltered). Dogs are allowed in most areas of the park, check the park website for area-specific regulations. Clean-up waste. Be prepared and dress in layers. Weather is unpredictable. For a full list of regulations, including fire regulations, check the park website. 

For Emergencies call 911.

If you are not familiar with the area, visit the park website or call 415-561-4755 or 1-800-410-2419.

WHERE TO BEGIN

• Take a self-guided walk at Fort Mason.
• Explore the ruins of Sutro Baths and nearby Sutro Heights Gardens.
• Discover what makes Fort Funston (in spring).
• Join in the Junior Ranger program at Deploys. Be sure tickets ahead!
• Walk the Esplanade at Ocean Beach.
• Take a history walking tour of Fort Mason.
• Walk around restored buildings among the coast redwoods. Make parking or shuttle reservations at: GoldenWoods.com or call 1-800-444-4444.

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