



Horses and Pack Animals



Horses and Pack Animals in the Park

Horses and other pack animals are permitted on most established trails and beaches at Point Reyes National Seashore. They may not travel off trail because conditions are not maintained for their safety, and their presence can negatively impact sensitive habitat.

Safety and Etiquette

Trail conditions vary throughout the year. Check with the Bear Valley Visitor Center at 415-464-5100 before your ride for current trail information and special closures. Always take a trail map with you. Free maps are available at visitor centers.

To help control the spread of non-native plants, please feed horses weed-free feed for a few days before visiting the park. Unloading manure or hay from horse trailers into parking lots or elsewhere within the national seashore is prohibited.

It is best not to ride alone. In case of an accident, send someone to the nearest visitor center or ranger station or call 911. Give a good description of your location and the nature of injury to both horse and rider.

Stinging nettle is a common plant at Point Reyes. Horses can react strongly if they are stung by this plant's small needle-like hairs. In extreme cases, horses have died after exposure to this plant. Some

trails may be overgrown at certain times of the year with nettle. Both horse and rider should avoid this plant. The best way to do this is to stay on the trail.

The convention for yielding right-of-way on the trail is the same at Point Reyes as at other parks. Horses have the right of way: hikers yield to horses, and bicyclists yield to both horses and hikers. Remember that interactions can occur with little warning on curves and hills. Slow your horse to a walk when encountering other trail users. Remain alert. Share the trail.

To control erosion and lessen impact, short-cutting trails or switchbacks is prohibited.

Horses may only be tied to hitching rails, not to trees, faucets, picnic tables, etc.

Allow plenty of time for your ride. Trails over Inverness Ridge can be steep and physically stressful for your horse. Plan adequate rest stops.

Trail Rides from Bear Valley

Bear Valley Trail - Easy 13.1 km (8.2 miles)
Take the Bear Valley Trail south. This is the most direct and level route to an ocean view from this trailhead. No beach access. Bear Valley Trail is not open to horses on weekends and holidays.

Mt. Wittenberg - Moderate 9.1 km (5.7 miles)
Take Morgan Trail to Horse Trail to Z Ranch Trail to Mt. Wittenberg Trail to Bear Valley Trail to trailhead. Horse Trail begins behind the Morgan Horse Ranch pastures, halfway between the ranch and Kule Loklo.

Inverness Ridge - Moderate 17.3 km (10.8 miles)
Take Bear Valley Trail to Mt. Wittenberg Trail to Sky Trail to Coast Trail to Bear Valley Trail then back to the trailhead.

Coastal ride - Strenuous 20.3 km (12.7 miles)
Take Bear Valley Trail to Mt. Wittenberg Trail to Sky Trail to Woodward Valley Trail to Coast Trail to Fire Lane Trail to Sky Trail to Horse Trail to trailhead. You can get down to a beach at Coast Camp.

Trail Rides from Five Brooks Trailhead

San Andreas Fault - Easy 13.8 km (8.6 miles)
Rift Zone Trail to Bear Valley and back. Mostly flat trail with cattle gates. The trail can be extremely muddy during the rainy season.

Wildcat Beach - Strenuous 21.4 km (13.4 miles)
Stewart Trail to Wildcat Camp and back. You can get down to a beach at Wildcat Camp. Many trails

exist in this area, so a variety of loop trips may be ridden.

Lakes Tour - Strenuous 22.6 km (14.1 miles)
Olema Valley Trail to Bolema Trail to Lake Ranch Trail to Coast Trail to Wildcat Camp/Beach to Stewart Trail to Greenpicker Trail to Stewart Trail to trailhead.

Areas Closed to Horses and Pack Animals

On Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, the following trails are closed to horses and pack animals:

- Bear Valley Trail between the Mt. Wittenberg Trail and Glen Trail junctions
- Meadow Trail and Old Pine Trail

Horses and pack animals may not be ridden in the following areas at any time:

- Drakes Beach
- Self-guided interpretive trails such as the Earthquake Trail, the Woodpecker Trail, or Kule Loklo
- Off trail in campgrounds, picnic areas, or vicinity. You may not leave animals for extended periods of time in campground areas unless you have obtained a permit for overnight use.
- Dunes and vegetated areas on beaches.

The following areas have seasonal closures:

- The western end of Limantour Spit is closed to all entry from March 1 through June 30 to protect harbor seals. Please stay at least 91 meters (300 feet) away from harbor seals.
- The Point Reyes Beach between the North Beach parking lot and the mouth of Abbotts Lagoon is closed to all entry on weekends and federal holidays from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day to better ensure the survival of western snowy plover nests and chicks.
- The southern portion of South Beach is closed to all entry from December 15 to March 31 to protect elephant seals. Please stay at least 8 meters (25 feet) away from elephant seals.

Camping with Horses and Pack Animals

Camping is allowed by permit only in three established campgrounds.

Permits must be obtained at the Bear Valley Visitor Center before starting your trip. Reservations through recreation.gov are recommended.

The maximum number of horses or pack animals permitted overnight at Sky, Coast, or Wildcat Campgrounds is eight. Horses are not permitted overnight at Glen Camp.

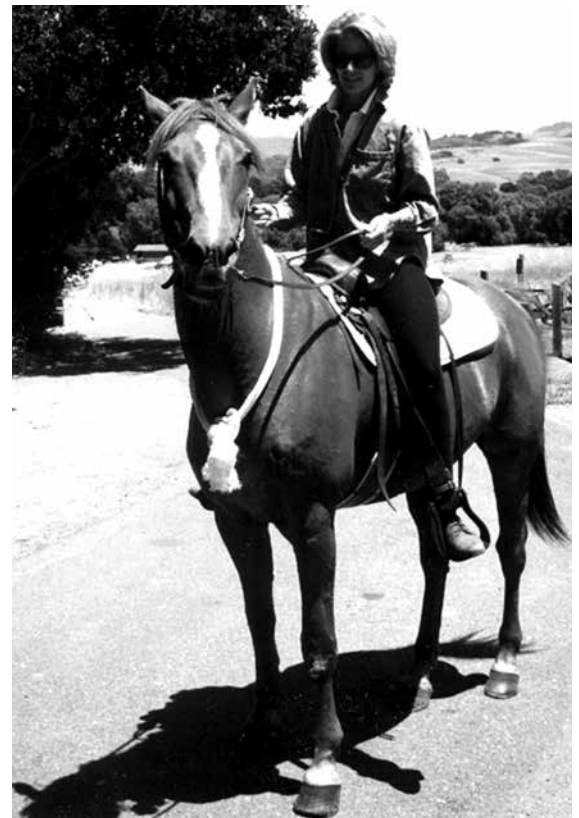
Pack animals and horses must be tied to hitching rails. Do not hitch animals to water supply faucets or picnic tables.

Grazing in the wilderness areas is prohibited. All feed for the animals must be packed in with you. In order to control the spread of introduced plants, please bring in only weed-free feed.

There is usually potable water available at each of the camps from faucets. Sky and Wildcat Campgrounds also have water troughs for horses and pack animals.

Special Use Permits are required for commercial horseback riding or pack trains into the backcountry. Visit <https://www.nps.gov/pore/planyourvisit/permitsandreservations.htm> for more information.

Overnight camping is also available at the Horse Camp. This is a privately managed camp located on Highway One, 1/4 mile north of Five Brooks Trailhead. 415-663-1570.



NPS Photo

Last updated 1/30/2020