

Seacliff

New Brighton 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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Seacliff State Beach

201 State Park Drive

Aptos, CA 95003

(831)685-6440

*Long stretches of
bluff-backed sandy
beaches invite visitors
to sit back and watch
a glorious sunset
or stroll peacefully
along the shore.*

The long stretch of bluff-backed sand at Seacliff State Beach invites visitors to sit back and watch a glorious sunset or simply to stroll peacefully along the shore. Its soft sands extend for more than a mile to connect with New Brighton State Beach, where wooded bluffs provide a matchless view of Monterey Bay.

SEACLIFF STATE BEACH

During the mid-1920s, landowners built summer homes on the bluffs above the beach at Seacliff and named the area south of Seacliff, Rio del Mar. On the other side of Seacliff, tourists enjoyed deluxe camping facilities. Seacliff became one of California's first state beaches in 1931.

Today beachfront camping at Seacliff is for recreational vehicles only, and picnicking, fishing and docent-led walks are among the most popular activities. The main entrance to Seacliff is from State Park Drive, off Highway 1 in Aptos, 5.5 miles south of Santa Cruz.



Seacliff pier

The Cement Ship

Seacliff's famous fishing pier extends out to a unique concrete tanker, the *SS Palo Alto*. It was built during World War I, when wartime steel shortages created a demand for alternate shipbuilding materials. However, when the war ended, so did the desperate need for ships, and the *Palo Alto* was never completed. In 1930 the Seacliff Amusement Corporation bought the ship and turned it into an elaborate amusement center. Once positioned at the beach, the *Palo Alto* was brought to rest on the ocean bottom and the pier was built leading to the ship.

A neon sign at the top of the bluff at Seacliff simply read *The Ship*. Thousands dined at the Fish Palace, with its spectacular ocean view on three sides. In the elegant Rainbow Ballroom, they danced on a new white ash floor. Unfortunately, the Seacliff Amusement Corporation went bankrupt after only two seasons of dining and dancing, thwarting future plans for expansion. Today the stripped and abandoned *Palo Alto* is unsafe and closed to the public, but the pier is open for fishing.

NEW BRIGHTON STATE BEACH

New Brighton, once known as China Beach or China Cove, was the site of a Chinese fishing village during the 1870s and 1880s. The village inhabitants proved invaluable in the building of the California railroad, and provided Santa Cruz with fish, produce, laundries, chefs and servants. However, commercial fishing slowed after dragnet fishing was outlawed in 1915. New Brighton became a state beach in 1933.



Seacliff pier and the "Palo Alto"

Picnicking, fishing, camping, hiking and swimming are favorite family activities at New Brighton State Beach, located four miles south of Santa Cruz, off Highway 1 at the intersection of Park and McGregor Drives. Phone (831) 464-6330.

PARK HISTORY

The Ohlone Indians thrived for thousands of years on the area's natural resources. The riches of the ocean, rivers and forests provided plentiful sources of food, from fish, shellfish and game to edible plants and seeds. The Ohlone were fine craftspeople, creating beautiful shell and feather adornments. Spanish colonization led to the establishment of Mission Santa Cruz, and when Mexico broke away from Spain in 1821, the land was subdivided into Mexican land grants (ranchos). Seacliff, known by 1833 as Rancho Aptos, developed into a bustling shipping port with the building of the Castro-Spreckels wharf. In the 1850s Thomas Fallon acquired part of Rancho Soquel and turned it into

a resort he named New Brighton, in honor of his favorite English seaside retreat.

WILDLIFE HABITATS

Much as a reef does, the *Palo Alto* attracts an immense variety of marine life within its concrete wreckage, and many of the same animals found on rocky shores live on its concrete sides. Mussels, barnacles, sea stars, sea anemones, ocean worms and rock crabs all cling to the sides of the ship and pier. Harbor seals line the deck, while pelicans and cormorants perch on the bow. Anglers catch sole, flounder, mackerel, halibut, lingcod, cabezon, jacksmelt, perch, anchovy, bocaccio (tomcod), kingfish, and occasionally salmon and steelhead from the pier. During summer and early fall, sooty shearwaters—small, dark seabirds—arrive by the tens of thousands from as far south as New Zealand, soaring in figure eights over the water, searching for anchovies. Sea lions, harbor seals, dolphins, sea otters and whales also visit the area.

RECREATION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

State park regulations prohibit climbing the sandstone cliffs and digging or collecting fossils, but Seacliff State Beach offers guided walks to view these relics of a long-ago ancient sea. Children's activities include arts and crafts that



Schoolchildren learning about fossils

highlight Seacliff's story. Camping is a popular activity at Seacliff, and many campsites have hookups. Campfire and Junior Ranger programs are offered at New Brighton during the summer.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES &

- **Seacliff State Beach**—The visitor center exhibits and activities, picnic area and fishing pier are accessible. Call ahead to reserve a beach wheelchair.
- **New Brighton State Beach**—Family camping, parking and restrooms are accessible. Accessibility is continually improving. For more information, visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Sunset State Beach, 16 miles south of Santa Cruz (831) 763-7062
- Manresa State Beach, 13 miles south of Santa Cruz (831) 761-1795
- Twin Lakes State Beach, near the Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor (831) 427-4868



Sea lions

PLEASE REMEMBER

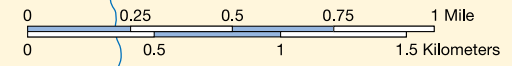
- Day-use hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. from May 1 to October 31 and 8:00 a.m. to 1/2 hour after sunset from November 1 to April 30. Campground quiet hours are from 10:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m.
- Rollerblading and skateboarding are not allowed.
- The speed limit is 15 mph. Watch out for children, pedestrians and bicycles.
- Vehicles are not allowed on gravel or dirt walkways.
- Dogs (where allowed) must be on a leash no longer than six feet and always attended by their owners.
- Do not feed or leave food out for wildlife.
- A fishing license is not required to fish from the pier, but Department of Fish and Game limits apply.
- Alcohol is not allowed on the beach or in the day-use areas.
- Fires are not allowed on Seacliff's beach. At New Brighton and Rio del Mar, fires must be confined to fire rings provided and attended at all times.
- No wood gathering. Purchase firewood at the entrance station or at the camp host site.
- No more than two vehicles will be permitted in each campsite.

This park is supported in part through a nonprofit organization. For more information contact: Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks • 114 School Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 • (831) 429-1840 www.scparkfriends.org



Legend

- | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------|--|-----------------|--|-----------------------|
| | Freeway | | Campfire Center | | Restrooms |
| | Paved road | | 14-50 Campsites | | Showers |
| | Trail | | Fishing | | RV Sanitation Station |
| | Accessible Feature | | Parking | | Swimming |
| | Campground | | Picnic Area | | Telephone |
| | Hike/Bike Campground | | Ranger Station | | |



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New Brighton
State Beach

Seacliff
State Beach

