The beautiful forest and mountain meadows of Palomar Mountain State Park are in northern San Diego County on the west side of Palomar Mountain. Large pine, fir and cedar trees make the 1,862-acre park one of the few areas in southern California with a Sierra Nevada-like atmosphere. Elevation within the park averages 5,000 feet above sea level, making evenings cool even during the summer. A number of vista points offer sweeping panoramic views both westerly toward the ocean and inland toward the desert.

To the east, beyond the limits of the park, is the world-famous Palomar Observatory and the highest point of the 6,100-foot mountain. Many park visitors make the eight-mile trip up the road to the observatory, which is operated by the California Institute of Technology. The observatory is open to the public free of charge from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily.

**HISTORY**

Deep, well-worn bedrock mortars and metates in Doane Valley are reminders of those many centuries when Luiseno Indians maintained seasonal villages, hunted game and gathered acorns and other seed crops here on the slopes of Palomar Mountain. The village sites and ten smaller, temporary camps or gathering stations have been identified within the present-day park. At least two separate groups of Luisenos are known to have established exclusive territories on the mountain. The area around Boucher Lookout was called Tai. Iron Springs near Bailey Lodge was called Paivi. Other areas were known as Chakuli, Malava and Ashachakwo. These areas were used during the summer and early autumn for hunting and gathering acorns, pine seeds, elderberries and grass seeds. The main Luiseno village at the foot of the mountain was called Pauma. Sturdy conical houses known as wikups or kecha kecumart were made of pine poles covered with bark. Semi-subterranean “sweat houses” were centrally located in the village and used for purification and curing rituals. Handcrafted products included clay jars, woven baskets, throwing sticks, nets for fishing or carrying, bows and arrows and a variety of utensils for cooking and eating. The Luisenos called this mountainous area Wavamaw, but when the Spaniards arrived in the 19th century, they named it Palomar, or “place of the pigeons,” a reference to the thousands of bandtailed pigeons that nested in the area.

In 1798 Mission San Luis Rey was established four miles upstream from the mouth of the San Luis Rey River. Pines and firs from Palomar Mountain were used in its construction. An outpost, or assistencia, was established at Pala in 1816. Father Antonio Peyri, the Franciscan missionary at Mission San Luis Rey from 1798 to 1832, spent several weeks each year working with the Indians who lived in or near what is now Palomar Mountain State Park. He was persuasive and soon came to be greatly loved, but the mission way of life here and elsewhere in California had some terrible effects on the Luisenos. The sudden and complete disruption of age-old living patterns, as well as the introduction of European diseases, quickly resulted in a severe decline in the population. The mission was closed down in 1834 when Governor Figueroa issued direct orders to “secularize” all of the California missions. Today many descendants of the mission period Luisenos live on nearby reservations and continue to follow the Catholic religion. They also maintain some of their earlier cultural and religious beliefs and practices.

In 1846 the slopes of Palomar Mountain were included, at least theoretically, in the famous Warner Ranch. In 1851, however, the Indians drove Warner off the land. For a time thereafter, cattle and horse thieves used the remote mountain meadows of Palomar to shelter their stolen animals until it was safe to take them across the border into Mexico. Nathan Harrison, a black slave who came to California during the gold rush, took up residence as a free man near the eastern edge of the present park in the 1860s. He grew hay and raised hogs in

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**PICNIC KICKING**

Silvercrest picnic area, near park headquarters, has barbecue grills (briquettes), water and restrooms. **There are restrictions on the use of firewood.** For day-use hours, call us or visit our website.

**RECYCLING**

Recycling containers are located near the trash cans. Please help us conserve resources by separating your recyclables before throwing your trash away.

**FISHING**

Doane Pond is open year-round and is stocked with trout. Fishing is especially good during the winter, spring and early summer. Fishing is not permitted at night. A valid California fishing license is required. There is also informal picnicking near the pond, with several tables and grills, a restroom and a parking lot. For fishing hours, call us or visit our website.

**TRAILS**

A variety of hiking trails is available within the park. Some lend themselves to short, leisurely walks and others are suitable for vigorous, all-day hikes. The scenery includes open meadows and thick coniferous or oak forests. Trails are open to foot traffic only. Dogs, horses and mountain bikes are not allowed on trails. Visitors are welcome to hike on Myer’s Fire Road, east of the Doane Valley Campground.

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**NATURAL HISTORY**

Some 40 inches of rainfall each year supports a wonderful forest on the slopes of Palomar Mountain, including big cone Douglas-fir, white fir, incense cedar, live oak, black oak, coulter pine and yellow pine. Flowering trees and shrubs include western dogwood, azalea and both purple and white wild lilac, with juncus grass, goldenrod, lupine, buttercups and penstemons in the meadow areas. The most commonly seen wildlife in the park includes southern mule deer, western gray squirrels, raccoons and striped skunks. Predators such as gray foxes, coyotes, bobcats and even mountain lions are also present, but are not often seen. Doane Pond is stocked with trout and also contains bluegill, bullhead and channel catfish.

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**CAMPSITE RESERVATIONS**

Campsites can be reserved up to seven months in advance of arrival by visiting www.reserveamerica.com or by calling 1-800-444-7275. From outside the USA, call (916) 638-5883. Persons with hearing impairments can call TDD number: 1-800-274-7275.

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**HISTORIC FIRE TOWER**

Over a mile high in elevation, Boucher Hill Summit provides spectacular views of the valley below, as well as the ocean, from Catalina Island to the Coronado Islands. Also featured is a historic fire tower that is still in operation to detect wildfires in San Diego, Riverside and Orange Counties. Access to the summit is by car or foot, and the observation deck is wheelchair accessible.
Palomar Mountain State Park is supported by
Friends of Palomar Mountain State Park
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