

Explore! Play! Learn!

Connecting student groups with their local California state parks



A planning and resource guide from the California State Parks Foundation

*“Time in nature is not leisure time;
it’s an essential investment in our children’s health.”*

– Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods:
Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder.*



CALIFORNIA
STATE PARKS
FOUNDATION

California State Parks Foundation Mission Statement

With our 120,000 members, CSPF is the only statewide independent nonprofit membership organization dedicated to protecting, enhancing, and advocating for California’s magnificent state parks. CSPF is committed to improving the quality of life for all Californians by expanding access to the natural beauty, rich culture and history, and recreational and educational opportunities offered by California’s 280 state parks – one of the largest state park systems in the United States.



California State Parks Educational Mission Statement

The most powerful forms of education are meaningful, involve the student, promote critical thinking, and appeal to different learning styles. Our mission is to provide educational experiences both in California State Parks and in the classroom, assisting educators with curriculum needs and offering activities that enable students to investigate, research, and participate in interactive learning.

The California State Parks Foundation gratefully acknowledges the David & Lucile Packard Foundation for generously supporting this project.

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Introduction

WELCOME

We're glad you've decided to bring your student group to a California state park. Park visits are educational, healthy, and fun. Kids who spend time experiencing nature are healthier, smarter, and have fewer behavior problems. Not only that, field trips make for some of the most memorable events from childhood.

State parks feature California's richest and most important cultural and natural resources. State parks also offer a broad range of educational programming, from self-guided hikes to living history programs and overnight camping.

Your students will learn about natural habitats, animals, and California's cultural history; they'll have the chance to take on new skills and discover something about themselves in the process.

State parks provide hands-on, outside opportunities to learn and recreate, giving students the rare opportunity to be both academically engaged and physically active. High-quality outdoor programs keep students engrossed in learning, teach new skills, help them stay fit and active, and foster creativity and innovation. Moreover, recent studies show that quality summer programs can help reduce summer learning loss and behavioral risks.

"... there is evidence suggesting that nature specifically can improve attention and other psychological aspects of health. Playing in nature can positively impact children's health and well-being.... Together we can teach them how to protect their health and the environment."

– *Fact Sheet: Children's Health in Nature (2010)*
National Environmental Education Foundation

DID YOU KNOW? California State Parks are natural classrooms. Our state parks provide environment-based learning for more than 500,000 kids annually, making parks second only to our public schools in the educational opportunities they offer to California's schoolchildren.

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This resource guide is designed specifically to help connect student groups with their local California State Parks and the educational programming found within them. Though this guide addresses some of the special concerns of afterschool and summer program providers, it's designed for use by grade school teachers, scout leaders, parents, and youth group instructors as well.

In the following pages, you'll find out how to: locate the state parks nearest you; choose the educational program that's best for your group; and contact key park employees who can help you organize and plan for a successful field trip. We've included suggestions for how to prepare, what to bring, what to expect the day of your visit, as well as "Tips" for avoiding unnecessary frustrations.

We wish you a successful visit and, perhaps most importantly, invite you to explore, play, and learn in your local state parks.

Enjoy your visit,

Elizabeth Goldstein, President
California State Parks Foundation

*"Must we always teach our children with books?
Let them look at the stars and the mountains above.
Let them look at the waters and the trees and flowers on Earth.
Then they will begin to think, and to think is the beginning of
a real education."*

– *David Polis*

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*“I only went out for a walk,
and finally concluded to stay
out till sundown, for going out,
I found, was really going in.”*

– John Muir

Choose Your Park

WHY CHOOSE A LOCAL STATE PARK?

Your local state park may be closer than you think. In fact, half of California's state parks are near urban centers. Choosing a local state park has many advantages. A park that's close by makes arranging transportation easier; allows for multiple visits and in-depth programs; and may even be accessible through public transportation.

When selecting a state park, consider not just its physical features, but also the availability of educational programs or an experienced interpreter. Park staff and volunteers may be available to help you create a personalized, in-depth, and excellent overall experience for your group.

Getting started: three key steps

Step 1: Identify a park

Step 2: Choose the type of visit

Step 3: Contact the park

STEP 1: IDENTIFY A PARK

With 280 state parks in the California system, finding a state park that's near you is easy. Go to the California State Parks' website (www.parks.ca.gov) and select the Visit a Park tab at the top of the page.

In the Find a Park section of the website you can search for a park by region, county or city, type of activity, even by availability of campsites. Or, simply search the alphabetical listing of California's state parks.

Some questions you might consider when selecting a park include:

What are the transportation options? What is the length of the program and how long will it take to travel to/from the site? What is the maximum number of students that can be accommodated per group? What is the fee?


Once you find a park that interests you, visit its page on the California State Parks' website to locate specific educational programming information. Be sure to ask about any available educational materials.



Find a Park by Region

Click on the number of region on the Map to the left or click the region name below. To find a specific park or to find a park by an activity go to [Visit a Park](#)

1. North Coast
2. San Francisco Bay Area
3. Central Coast
4. Los Angeles County
5. Orange County
6. Inland Empire
7. San Diego County
8. Shasta Cascade
9. Gold Country
10. Central Valley
11. High Sierra
12. Deserts



San Luis Reservoir
STATE RECREATION AREA



CA.GOV California DISCOVER THE #1

Home Visit a Park Park Management
About Us Contacts Publications Custo

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS SINCE 1909 Discover the n

Region Search
Use this list to select multiple regions

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 North Coast	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 San Francisco Bay Area
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Central Coast	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Los Angeles County
<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Orange County	<input type="checkbox"/> 6 Inland Empire
<input type="checkbox"/> 7 San Diego County	<input type="checkbox"/> 8 Shasta Cascade
<input type="checkbox"/> 9 Gold Country	<input type="checkbox"/> 10 Central Valley
<input type="checkbox"/> 11 High Sierra	<input type="checkbox"/> 12 Deserts

GO

STEP 2: CHOOSE THE TYPE OF VISIT

Once you've identified a local state park, your next step is to decide on the type of program that would best meet your group's needs and goals. You can choose from Self-guided and Guided Tours or Walks; specialized Interpretive Programs (either one-time or recurring); and Camping Programs.

What type of visit is best for your group?



Self-Guided Tour: Groups are able to use facilities and enjoy independent interpretation through brochures, signs, or the use of educational guides that can be found online at the individual park's website. Sometimes park staff or volunteers will give a brief orientation of the park upon your arrival.



Guided Tour or Walk: A park staff member or volunteer will conduct a docent- or interpreter-led tour through the park or facility, highlighting the park's resources. Individual parks may charge a small fee or request a donation for this service while others will be free.



Interpretive Programs: Interpretive programs are led by staff and volunteers and offer interactive and educational activities. Programs vary in length and content, depending on the park's resources and staffing capacity. Programs can include environmental education and environmental living programs, the Junior Ranger program, and more. Some programs may require a fee or donation depending on the park.



Camping Program: These programs involve an overnight stay in either group campgrounds or historical buildings within state parks. Camping equipment can be reserved through FamCamp at participating parks. (See FamCamp sidebar information.)

DID YOU KNOW? FamCamp is free, but you'll need to book EARLY!
(See page 7 for full details)

You'll also need to decide if you want a day or overnight visit, and whether multiple visits are an option for your group. Programming varies from park to park, but most programs can be tailored to the needs of your group. The Environmental Educational Programs descriptions (and specific examples) in the next section will give you an idea of what is available.

IDEAL PLANNING TIMELINES

TYPE OF VISIT	BEGIN PLANNING AT LEAST:
Self-guided Tour	2 weeks in advance
Guided Walk or Tour	8 weeks in advance
Interpretive Program	8 weeks in advance
Overnight Camping	7 months in advance

TIP: It's best to book your summer campsite 7 months in advance (the earliest time possible) to avoid disappointment. Make July reservations by January 2nd.

www.parks.ca.gov/reservations 1 (800) 444-7275

Be sure to reserve the Group Camp, not the family camp.
Pay attention to the maximum number of people allowed.



STEP 3: CONTACT THE PARK

Contact your local state park and locate an interpreter or interpretive specialist. Call the park's main number, or identify the website of your park's cooperating association, and ask for the interpreter or park staff member who handles school programs. This person can work with you to determine the program that's best for your group, and may even be able to help with logistics to ensure a successful visit. Your park contact may also make specific recommendations for how to prepare, what to bring along, and transportation options.

The role of cooperating associations

Many state parks have the support of a cooperating association. More than 80 of these non-profit, charitable organizations help enhance the educational and interpretive programs in California State Parks. Many associations have their own websites. Cooperating associations play a vital role in supporting a park; they often run their own interpretive programs and even publish park-specific books and educational materials. Cooperating associations are listed in the left-hand margin of each state park's web page.

TIP: Use the planning sheets, packing lists (for instructors and participants), and suggested timelines at the back of the Guide to help you plan for a successful state park visit.

“Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons. It is to grow in the open air, and to eat and sleep with the earth.”

– Walt Whitman

DID YOU KNOW? State park interpreters:

- are specially trained to provide educational interpretation at parks
- have expert knowledge of local flora & fauna
- may help provide information in advance of your visit



Choose Your Program

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Educational programs vary from park to park, and most are adaptable. Tell your park contact which elements you'd like to emphasize (specific content standards, nutrition, physical activity) and he or she can work with you to create a customized visit or direct you toward educational materials and resources to create your own program.

Some or all of these programs may be available at your local state park. Check the Environmental Education Programs guide at www.parks.ca.gov to find more examples of these programs in a park near you. Be sure to also check your local state park's web page for details, updates, and a link to its cooperation association.

Most parks allow groups to take **SELF-GUIDED TOURS** of the facilities and enjoy independent interpretation through brochures, signs, or the use of educational guides that can be found online at the individual park's or cooperating association's website. Sometimes park staff or volunteers will give a brief orientation of the park upon arrival. In addition to self-guided tours and hikes, most parks will allow you to conduct your own activities. See the Activity Guide section on pages 19-23 for ideas to try with your students.



NATURAL HISTORY FIELD TRIPS (programs, tours, or demonstrations relating to natural history themes) are presented to student groups and are usually facilitated by a park staff member or volunteer. *Advance reservations are required.*

Examples include:

During "Coe Connections" at **Henry Coe State Park**, near the Silicon Valley, students engage in stream studies to discover water quality and enjoy hiking and games that focus on plants, animals, and ecological concepts. www.coe-park.org/coe-connections

In Sycamore Canyon Guided Wild Adventures hikes at Point Magu State Park, in Southern California, students hike and learn about the geological and natural highlights of the Santa Monica Mountains or go tide pooling at Leo Carillo State Beach. (805) 488-1827 x 106

A GUIDE TO ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

COUNTY	UNIT	TELEPHONE	PROGRAMS										COMMENTS				
Alameda	Carnegie SVRA	(925) 447-9027															Off-Road PALM Programs
Alpine	Glover Hot Springs SP	(530) 694-2248															Also (916) 525-7232
Amador	Indian Grinding Rock SHP	(209) 296-7488															
Butte	Bidwell Mansion SHP	(530) 895-6144															In-School Programs
Butte	Lake Oroville SRA	(530) 638-2219															In-School Programs
Butte *Glenn	Bidwell-Sacramento River SP	(530) 342-5185															In-School Programs
Calaveras, *Tadoussac	Calaveras Big Trees SP	(209) 795-2304															Jr. Ranger, Coas. VC (Parks 20) 295-3841
Colusa	Colusa-Sacramento River SRA	(925) 458-4927															In-School Programs
Contra Costa	Mount Diablo SP	(925) 837-2525															
Del Norte	Del Norte Coast Redwoods SP	(707) 454-6101 ext. 5311															Also (707) 464-6101 ext. 5105
Del Norte	Jedediah Smith Redwoods SP	(707) 454-6101 ext. 5312															Also (707) 464-6101 ext. 5105
Del Norte, *Humboldt	Prairie Creek Redwoods SP	(707) 454-6101 ext. 5311															Also (707) 464-6101 ext. 5105
El Dorado	D. L. Bliss SP	(530) 525-7232															In-School Programs
El Dorado	Eureka Bay SP	(530) 525-7232															
El Dorado	Marshall Gold Discovery SHP	(530) 295-2170															
El Dorado	Sugar Pine Point SP	(530) 525-7232															In-School Programs
El Dorado, *Placer, *Sacramento	Folsom Lake SRA	(916) 988-0205															
El Dorado, *Placer, *Sacramento	Water Education Center	(916) 989-7100															
Fresno, *Madera	Millerton Lake SRA	(209) 822-2332															Youth Faring Programs
Glenn, *Butte	Bidwell-Sacramento River SP	(916) 342-5185															In-School Programs
Humboldt	Bentbow Lake SRA	(707) 923-3238															Also (707) 247-3318
Humboldt	Fort Humboldt SHP	(707) 445-6567															School Days!
Humboldt	Gizzly Creek Redwoods SP	(707) 777-3683															Also (707) 464-6101 ext. 5105
Humboldt	Humboldt Redwoods SP	(707) 948-2409															Walk Along! Field Seminars
Humboldt	Pubek's Point SP	(707) 677-3570															Also (707) 464-6101
Humboldt	Rohrer's Grove SP	(707) 247-3318															



Los Angeles State Historic Park features an innovative urban “Campfire Program” that takes place at sunset, one Saturday a month, May – September. Kids are invited to bring their families to learn more about the natural history of the park and even roast a marshmallow or two. <http://lashp.com>



During **CULTURAL HISTORY FIELD TRIPS**, students learn first-hand about California’s rich cultural heritage by visiting state historic parks. Tours, programs, and demonstrations are provided to student groups by park staff. *Advance reservations are required.*

Examples include:

Wilder Ranch State Historic Park’s guided tours and living history program allows students to experience a historic farm, make their own butter, and see live animals. www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=549

The Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park provides daily, kid friendly tours that look at life throughout California’s history. http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=479



ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAMS offer schoolchildren a cultural park experience that explores the interaction between people and their environment. Students learn about earlier cultures and lifestyles, and use this knowledge to recreate elements of the culture or era. *Advance reservations are required for these fee-based programs.*

Examples include:

Columbia State Historic Park’s “Gold Trek” helps students imagine the experiences many young men faced as they traveled from Stockton to the diggings in search of gold. Along the route to the gold fields, students discover charlatans, merchants, ferry crossings, and opportunities to make critical decisions that impact their ability to arrive at the diggings ready to work. www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=24254

During **Monterey State Historic Park’s** “Mexican California” school program, 4th graders experience the Mexican-California Rancho period (1821–1846). Incorporating California public school Content Standards, students churn butter, make tortillas, weave on a wooden loom, make a rope, brand a piece of leather with a historic brand, and play 1830s three-pin bowling and also make a game they can keep. www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=575



ENVIRONMENTAL LIVING PROGRAMS are similar to environmental studies programs, but include an overnight stay at the park. Both programs incorporate demonstrations, hands-on activities, and follow-up student assignments. *Advance reservations and participation in teacher and parent workshops are required for these fee-based programs.*

Examples include:

Fort Ross State Historic Park’s Environmental Living Program allows 4th and 5th graders to experience the joys of California history as active participants. Students spend a day and a night performing some of the tasks that were a part of daily life at Fort Ross. Each student takes on the character and costume of a Fort Ross resident. *Advance reservations are required for this fee-based program.* www.fortrossstatepark.org/

When classes arrive at **Angel Island Historic State Park**, all participants become soldiers in the U.S. Army in the year 1864. They march to Camp Reynolds carrying their personal gear on their backs and bunk there for the night. Training includes militia drill, compass orienteering, mess cooking, bread baking, and flag signaling, and the firing of a twelve-pound, mountain howitzer cannon. www.angelisland.org/history/angel-island-state-park-living-history-program/

At **Fort Tejon State Park** (near Grapevine), schoolchildren take on the characters and activities of the past in order to “live history.” Students are introduced to Fort Tejon as “new recruits” in the U.S. Army and learn to work together as did recruits from the mid-nineteenth century. www.forttejon.org



The **JUNIOR RANGER PROGRAM** is a statewide educational program in which children aged 7 to 12 may participate. The program emphasizes stewardship of park resources and connects park resource issues to global concerns. (This program is best suited for one-on-one participation.)

Examples include:

Mount Diablo State Park's Junior Ranger series covers topics such as prehistoric times, wildlife, geology, ecology, Native Americans, and history. Each session is hosted by a park docent and a park ranger and includes instructional presentations, hands-on activities, and hikes.

<http://www.mdia.org/>



JUNIOR LIFEGUARD PROGRAMS teach young park visitors aged 8 to 15 about water safety and aquatic natural history. (This program is best suited for one-on-one participation.)

Examples include:

The **Huntington State Beach Junior Lifeguard Program** is a 4-week long, ocean-oriented course. Participants learn basic CPR skills, first aid, rescue techniques, and lifeguarding procedures. An interpretive component provides information about ocean habitats and local ecosystems, and includes field trips. www.hbstatejg.com/aboutjg.html

A typical day in the **Torrey Pines State Reserve** (in San Diego) Junior Lifeguard Program might include running, swimming, or paddling; beach ecology and marine life lectures; ocean safety, tides and waves; surfing; beach games and skills practice.

http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=28575



OVERNIGHT TRIPS

California State Parks have numerous campgrounds and observatories for star watching, making them ideal places for overnight student group experiences. (For complete details on overnight camping, please see the section that follows.)

Examples include:

Rent the **Robert Ferguson Observatory** (at Sugarloaf Ridge State Park, Sonoma) for an evening. The program includes a classroom presentation – customized for your students – docent-guided observing through any of the observatory's telescopes, a night-sky tour (weather permitting), and camping in the group campsite. A docent-led "PlanetWalk" hike can also be added. *Reservations should be made as early as possible to obtain the best observing times.* www.rfo.org/



VISIT A STATE PARK WITHOUT LEAVING THE CLASSROOM

PORTS (Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Students) uses the power of videoconferencing and California's K-12 High-Speed Network to deliver live, interactive presentations to classrooms from parks throughout the state. PORTS also provides fully developed units of study that furnish support, structure, preparation, and follow-up for these live presentations. Learn more at www.ports.parks.ca.gov

Tip: Weekday afternoons are often the least crowded at California's state parks and may be the perfect time to bring your afterschool group. Check with your local state park to find out.

"And forget not that the earth delights to feel your bare feet and the winds long to play with your hair."

– Kahlil Gibran

Overnight Camping

CAMPING WITH A GROUP

Begin your planning process by asking why you want to camp with your group. Are you going for the sake of the camping experience, to take advantage of a night program at an observatory, or will camping serve as a culminating event to close your summer program or learning unit? Knowing what you hope to get out of your camping experience will help you in selecting a state park campground.

Use the **Find a Park** tool on the California State Parks' website to locate the state park campgrounds nearest you. Check to see which facilities offer the amenities that you need – easy hiking trails, fire pits, picnic tables, showers, a cleared area for tents. You may also want to consider the weather. How hot will it be during the day? How cold at night? Find out, and plan accordingly.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR OVERNIGHT PROGRAMS

- ▲ Check to see if the Park participates in the FamCamp® Program. Stays are limited to 3 days and 2 nights. (See program description and requirements)
- ▲ It is recommended that two adult chaperones accompany every 10 students.

What is the FamCamp® Program?

The FamCamp® Program began in 1995 to introduce non-traditional users to California State Parks. The goal is to encourage the use of State Parks by community based organizations to recreate in an inexpensive, fun outdoor environment. Currently, there are 12 FamCamp trailers located throughout California providing camping equipment and campsites.

Each FamCamp® trailer accommodates up to 30 campers and contains: tents; sleeping bags and liners; pads; stoves; lanterns and propane. Groups are required to provide their own transportation, food, personal gear and a desire to experience the outdoors. Groups are responsible for the care of the equipment, proper storage after use; washing the sleeping bag liners and to leave the campsites free of trash. **Groups are limited to 3 days and two nights stay.**

Outdoor Recreation Leadership Training & the FamCamp® Program – How they support each other

To participate in the FamCamp® Program and to ensure organizations have a rewarding first-time camping experience, a representative(s) from the organization must attend the Outdoor Recreation Leadership Training offered through California State Parks – Office of Community Involvement. This interactive hands-on training prepares adults with the skills and confidence to lead outdoor recreation activities with an emphasis on camping as well as introducing underserved populations of their communities to the benefits of outdoor recreation. Certified participants become proficient in setting-up, using and packing-up all of the camping equipment in the FamCamp® trailer.



This training focuses on the role of outdoor recreation in developing leadership skills. The training combines outdoor recreation leadership, youth development principles, and community building tools. Participants will experience outdoor challenge activities as well as plan, implement and evaluate an overnight camping trip. Participants will be prepared, not only to lead overnight camping experiences with more confidence, but develop strategies and techniques to enhance all of their community programming.

To learn more about the above programs visit: California State Parks - Office of Community Involvement website at www.parks.ca.gov/oci

BE PREPARED

Never on Monday

It helps if the camping trip is not scheduled to leave on a Monday. That way you can remind students the day before the trip about logistics, what to bring, what NOT to bring, and safety; answer any last-minute questions; and send out a final notice to parents reminding them of designated drop-off and pick-up times.

Prepare Parents

Inform the parents of the camping trip as soon as you begin planning it. In a parent letter, include all the field trip details, contact information, a “to bring / not to bring” list, and permission form. Ask parents to provide any information that’s pertinent to their child staying overnight.

Decide whether you will “require” students to participate. Some parents are afraid to let their child go away on overnight trips. Reassure parents about safety precautions and inform them of the California State Park staff presence. It’s also a good idea to leave your contact information with the parents just in case they need to call, but also inform them that many campsites have no cell phone reception.

First-time camping jitters

First-time campers may be hesitant to go on an overnight trip because they are afraid. Reassure students by letting them know exactly what to expect and reminding them that chaperones and park staff are there to help keep the trip fun and safe.

Some students will likely feel homesick. A reassuring phone call from parents may be all they need to make them feel better about staying the duration of the trip. Talk in advance with chaperones and your park contact about how to handle severe cases of homesickness, especially if cell phone reception is an issue at the park.









TIP: Keep contact information for parents handy. If your return is delayed for any reason (late buses, traffic) you can avoid causing parents additional worry.

ACTIVITIES

Once your campsite is booked, begin planning the student activities you’ll want to do at the state park. (*Check the Activity Guide on pages 19-23 for ideas or ask your park contact for suggestions.*) Be sure to plan a variety of activities; include some to do with the entire group, some for small groups, and some for students to complete individually. Not everything should be timed or structured. Giving students time to be alone and with their friends is also a valuable part of the camp experience.

That said, it’s also helpful to have a few quick activities ready for times when you’ll need to wait – for the bus or for students who stopped to use the restroom.

Other activity ideas:

-  Educational nature hike – led by a park interpreter or volunteer
-  Small-group team-building games
-  Sports
-  Tie-dye shirts, socks
-  Night hike
-  Campfire songs / storytelling
-  Journal writing / reflection
-  Activities related to your curriculum

FOOD

After deciding your activities, your next step is to plan the menu for the trip. Cooking and providing snacks for a large group can be a challenge and requires a bit of planning. You may want to involve students by including meal planning in a lesson prior to the camping trip. Be sure to check for any food allergies – before you go – so no child is left without a snack.

To keep things running smoothly at the campground, provide students with jobs. Establish cooking and cleanup crews for each day, and provide them with specific tasks. Also assign your staff/chaperones specific days when they’ll be in charge of cooking or cleaning.



TRANSPORTATION

Campsites are sometimes hard to drive to, due to steep or winding roads. Check with your park contact regarding road conditions and whether large buses can be accommodated. We recommend that at least one staff member drives in a separate vehicle, in case of emergency or if additional supplies are needed. For more about transportation, see page 11.

SAFETY

Your park contact can help with safety talks for staff, chaperones, and students during a pre-camp presentation or camp orientation.

Key concerns

The main safety concerns are heat (dehydration), sunburn, poison oak, and ticks. With simple precautions, these can be avoided. Students should bring water bottles, hats, sunglasses, and sunscreen; they should wear long-sleeved shirts and pants when poison oak or ticks are present. To help prevent tick bites, students should tuck in their shirts and tuck pant legs into their socks.

Bring your own first-aid kit and advise your park contact, in advance, of any special, individual medical needs, including instructions for any children on medication. **Groups should always have a direct link to the Ranger, in case of an emergency.**

A word about eco-fear

The park areas that school groups visit are well traveled and completely safe. Very few wild animals pose a threat to humans. Most animals just want to be left alone. The biggest threats that exist in California State Parks usually have irritating, but not life-threatening, consequences. Poison oak, tick bites, and bee stings are the most common of these experiences and can easily be avoided by teaching students and chaperones how to identify poison oak, encouraging tick checks, and staying on trails.

Remember: Nothing out there wants to eat you! Learn about the park's local plants and animals, and you will understand that the most threatening thing in nature is you.

TIPS FOR TENTS

- ▲ Make tent assignments intentionally. You can allow students to stay with their friends, but also encourage them to meet newer students.
- ▲ Establish clear “lights out” and “lights on” times. Aside from campsite rules, this is important for staff and chaperones. They are going to be working 12+ hour days and will need their rest. Surprisingly, kids can stay up very late and still wake up VERY early, if they are allowed.
- ▲ Establish rules for leaving your tent in the middle of the night. For example, students must be with partners and with an adult if they leave their tent.
- ▲ Set up the adult tents to surround the kid tents. If kids leave their tents, the adults will know. Separate the boys and the girls.



DID YOU KNOW? Beach campgrounds fill up quickly. Inland campsites are more likely to have space available. Check at the time of reservation, as availability depends on location, date, and special events.

Sample Schedule and Activities for Middle School Science Overnight Camp*

FIRST DAY

10:30am Arrive at state park
Load student gear into trucks, for drop-off at campsite

11:00am Hike to campsite. Lunch at midway point.

1:00pm Set up tents

1:30pm Instructors help with activities, crafts, board games, etc.

2:45pm Snack

3:00pm Science Field Classes:
(Students are split into 3 groups and rotate among the following field classes)

Pond Quality Study
Materials: flex tanks, nets, clear plastic cups, pond life identification guides, magnified viewers, PondWater Tour, frog giggering resource materials, nature journals
Students do survey of different pond species, water quality tests, etc. to determine the water quality.

Tracking
Materials: soot tray/ sand pit, peanut butter, tracking cameras, memory card, card viewers (digital cameras), owl pellets, probes for dissection, tracking guides, tape measures, nature journals
Students learn basic tracking skills, identify tracks on trail, learn and measure gaits, and set up night cameras to survey wildlife. Students dissect owl pellets to determine what the owls ate.

Botany Class
Materials: tree and shrub guides with dichotomous key, microscopes, nature journals, tree ring dating kit
Talk about plant, plant families, and relationships. Place students in pairs and have them find a tree or shrub to identify using a dichotomous key. Do a vegetation survey. Look at different families of plants through microscope. Tree ring dating activity.

6:30pm Dinner
(Students have free time after dinner to get ready for evening programs.)

7:30pm Evening Program:
Night Hike
Materials: bat puppet
Assortment of activities and stories to learn ways that nocturnal animals adapt to the dark. Identify owl calls, and learn about how bats “see.” Set up tracking cameras.

Astronomy Class
Materials: Green laser pointer, telescope, tarps to lie on
Students learn constellations and basic astronomy principles while looking at the night sky. They are also able to look through telescope to see planets up close.

10:00pm Lights Out

SECOND DAY

7:30am Wake up, pack, load gear onto trucks

8:00am Breakfast

8:30am Hike back to bus (snacks on trail)

10:45am Load bus to return to school

12:00pm Arrive at school in time for lunch

*This overnight camp program is specific to Henry Coe State Park. Please check with your local state park to find overnight programs near you.

“Perhaps the wilderness we fear is the pause within our own heartbeats, the silent space that says we live only by grace. Wilderness lives by this same grace.”

– Terry Tempest Williams

Transportation

HOW WILL YOU ARRIVE?

Will you arrive by school bus, private vehicles, or public transportation? There are many transportation options, even for schools or groups with limited transportation budgets. You might arrange for parent drivers, apply for grants for buses, or use public transportation to get to your local state park. Many state parks are directly accessible by public transportation. Check with your local transportation agency for routes and schedules.

Funding opportunities

Finding funds for transportation is a key challenge for many groups and schools. Check with your park contact to see if the cooperating association offers grants or donations. Research non-profit organizations, such as the Foundation for Youth Investment, to find out about available grants. Amtrak's Kids n' Trains program provides reduced rates to school groups traveling to some state parks. (See sidebar for details.) Many groups fundraise to cover the cost for buses.

Communicating with bus companies

Call several times; ask to speak to the specific driver scheduled for your field trip.

Roads to state parks can be difficult for buses to navigate. Make sure to ask about road conditions when coordinating with your park contact. Be sure the driver knows where to drop off students. Please call the park directly to get road specifics and the best advice on how to enter, park, and exit.

Avoiding potential pitfalls

Make sure that you have the correct directions to the site you are going to in the park. State parks often have multiple entrances. A simple Google search may lead you to the park's department office, not visitor entrance. Confirm the best entrance and parking areas with your park contact before you leave for the park. On the day of your visit ask someone who has been to the park before to ride in the lead car or bus.

DID YOU KNOW? You can ride the train to some of California's state parks. Amtrak's Kids 'n Trains program makes it easy and cheap to take student groups to some of California's state parks, including Carpinteria State Beach and Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park. Taking the train makes the trip itself part of the experience, and your students will love it. Visit Amtrak's Kids 'n Trains program website for details and schedules. www.amtrakcalifornia.com/index.cfm/kids-n-trains/index.cfm

TIP: Don't rely on global satellite systems (like Google and Mapquest) for directions, or you might end up at the park's mailbox, instead of the main gate. Double-check with your park contact for directions to the best student drop-off, parking, and entry points.



How to have a successful visit

PLAN FOR SUCCESS

Communication and advance planning are the essential ingredients for a successful visit. Strong communication between your organization and key park personnel will help you get the most out of your state park visit. State park staff can help: prepare you and your students for a park visit; avoid unnecessary headaches; and create a better, more enriching experience.

BEFORE YOUR VISIT

You'll want to work closely with your park contact throughout the planning process. Plan to make a pre-visit to the park to review the site and then a second visit with your staff to plan the program details with your contact.

The following planning questions and timeline will also help you prepare for a successful visit.

Key planning questions to ask your park contact

- 🏠 What is the structure of an interpreter-led park trip?
- 🏠 What is the ideal group size?
- 🏠 What's the maximum student capacity? And are there ways to expand the program, so more kids can participate?
- 🏠 Can hands-on activities and curriculum be provided?
- 🏠 Is there a designated lunch area?
- 🏠 What are the arrival procedures?
- 🏠 What are the best directions/drop-off and parking for school buses?
- 🏠 Is the park accessible by public transportation?
- 🏠 How can we integrate the park program into the school-year program (more in-class activities)?
- 🏠 Are there any weather or terrain considerations?
- 🏠 Ask your park contact to recommend the best student-to-chaperone ratio – plan to assign at least 1 chaperone for each 10 students.

DID YOU KNOW? Your park contact can help:

- Make program suggestions
- Set the agenda
- Direct you to online curricula or provide packets
- Tailor programs based on your emphasis (content standards, nutrition/health, etc.)
- Build a program based on repeat visits (throughout the school year)



Preparing your students for a park visit

- 🏠 Introduce students to the vocabulary and educational concepts to be presented in the program.
- 🏠 Ensure that parents equip their child for weather – jackets, or layered clothing, and closed shoes for cool temperatures; hats, sunglasses, and water shoes for warmer park programs.
- 🏠 Divide students into groups of 15. (maximum)
- 🏠 Give a nametag to each student and chaperone.
- 🏠 Plan your own alternative activities. (See suggestions in this Guide.)
- 🏠 Check your estimated arrival time. Allow for delays, i.e., road construction, traffic.
- 🏠 Review the list of behavior expectations.
- 🏠 Remind students to leave cell phones, iPods, all electronic devices, and other valuables at home.
- 🏠 Bring water.



Behavior Expectations

- ▲ Listen when your park contact or someone else is speaking.
- ▲ Stay on marked trails and with your group leader.
- ▲ Be careful not to disturb natural or cultural resources. Leave everything as it was before you came.
- ▲ Use quiet voices whenever you are inside (museums, historical buildings, visitor centers/gift shops).
- ▲ Eat in designated areas only and clean up afterward.
- ▲ Be considerate in the restrooms; please help keep them clean.
- ▲ Ask before touching. Architectural and cultural features are very old and delicate. To preserve them you may be asked to handle items carefully or, in some cases, not at all.
- ▲ Keep an open mind, try something new, and have fun.

TIP: If you are running late, please notify your park contact immediately.

DID YOU KNOW? You shouldn't share your lunch with wildlife. It's unhealthy for wildlife to eat human food. Any lunch scraps or trash left in shoreline parks will attract aggressive birds (such as jays, magpies, ravens, & crows), which can threaten the nesting grounds of endangered bird species.



DURING YOUR VISIT

You'll want to work closely with your park contact throughout the planning process. Plan to make a pre-visit to the park to review the site and then a second visit with your staff to plan the program details with your contact.

The following planning questions and timeline will also help you prepare for a successful visit.

Upon arrival

Predetermine with your park contact a place to meet upon your arrival. Plan to gather all students here for a brief orientation.

It's usually a good idea to arrive at least 10 minutes prior to your scheduled program or self-guided tour. This allows time to gather your group and get ready for an orientation with park personnel.

Depending on the park, you may work with a park interpreter, volunteer, park aide, or ranger.

Remember:

- ◆ Buses may need to drop off students in a different location from cars.
- ◆ Reiterate expectations for behavior before leaving the bus, and clarify how adults will help.
- ◆ Bring instructions for any child on medication or who requires special medical attention.
- ◆ Distribute student nametags.
- ◆ Organize students into their groups before arriving at the park.
- ◆ Assign chaperone(s) to each group.
- ◆ Determine where in the park you'll gather for lunch. (Ask your park contact)



Accessibility

Please advise your park contact, in advance, of any special needs (behavioral, physical, intellectual). Your park contact can direct you toward wheelchair-accessible areas, videos with closed-captioning, and other options for accommodating the needs of your group.

Parking

Ask ahead of time for the best bus and car parking locations. Bus parking is often limited and in a separate location from car parking. Obtain directions from your park contact, not Google or other internet mapping services.

Safety

The main safety concerns are heat (dehydration), sunburn, poison oak, and ticks. With simple precautions, these can be avoided. Students should bring water bottles; hats, sunglasses, and sunscreen; and they should wear long-sleeved shirts and pants when poison oak and ticks are present. To help prevent tick bites, students should tuck their shirts into pants and tuck pants into socks.

Your own activities

You may not be with your park contact during your entire visit. Please plan to bring your own activities to enhance the learning experience. The Activity Guide (in the Additional Resources section) includes activities that can be used with students before, during, and after your visit.





AFTER YOUR VISIT

Post-visit activities

Check the park's and cooperating association's websites or ask your park contact for post-visit activities and suggestions for reinforcing the material covered during your visit. See the Activity Guide section for ideas; you'll find activities to use before, during, and after your visit.

Staying connected with your local state park

Encourage students to go back to the park with family members. They'll be excited to share what they've learned and may even want to lead their families in a self-guided tour or walk.

Plan another visit

Consider bringing your student group back to the park for another program or for more in-depth study. Now that you've had at least one successful group visit, it'll be easier to plan your next trip.

*"The voice of nature is
always encouraging."*

– Henry David Thoreau



Planning Tools

VISIT PLANNING SHEET

Date: _____ Park Name/Location: _____

Park Contact (name/email/phone #): _____

Type of Program: _____

Program Length/Time: _____ Fee: _____

Program description:

Special program features:

Transportation options (see also Transportation Planning Sheet):

Notes about terrain, weather conditions, other considerations:

PLANNING QUESTIONS

Key planning questions to ask your park contacts

- What is the structure of an interpreter-led park trip?
Do you split into smaller groups? What is the ideal group size?
- What's the max student capacity? And are there ways to expand the program, so more kids can participate? How many chaperones are recommended?
- What are the arrival procedures?
- Are there any special transportation concerns?
- Can hands-on activities and curriculum be provided?
- Is there a designated lunch area?
- What are the best directions/drop-off and parking for buses?
- How can we integrate the park program into the school-year program (more in-class activities)?
- Are there any weather or terrain considerations?

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING SHEET

Travel time to/from site:

How will you arrive (public transportation, school bus, or private vehicles)?

Notes about student drop off and parking

Do buses and cars park in the same location?

Road conditions to be aware of: (narrow, steep, or unpaved roads; construction)

Directions to main entrance (Please verify with your park contact:

Group gathering spot (visitor center, main gate, trailhead, etc.):

PLANNING TIMELINE: SOME ESSENTIAL STEPS

UP TO SEVEN MONTHS BEFORE (overnight camping):

- Check availability of group campgrounds at local state parks.
- Book your campsites. 1 (800) 444-7275
- Check availability of FamCamp equipment trailer

EIGHT WEEKS BEFORE:

- Contact the park you plan to visit.
- Go to site and meet with your park contact to discuss programming options and any special needs your group may have.
- Set up a pre-visit meeting at the site for all involved staff.
(review trails, rules, activities)
- If using the FamCamp equipment, sign up for special training (required).

TWO WEEKS BEFORE:

- Confirm your transportation.
- Make a pre-visit with all involved staff to tour the site and meet your park contact (review trails, rules, planned activities, designated lunch area).
- Discuss options for lunch.
- Conduct pre-visit activities with students.
- Send parent letter/permission slip (including packing list and student behavior expectations).

ONE WEEK BEFORE:

- Gather your paperwork.
- Print maps for bus or other drivers.
- Print student nametags.
- Call park to confirm and finalize plans.
- Confirm lunch plans and designated eating area.
- Confirm best student drop-off and parking locations.
- Advise your park contact of special needs (student with special physical, behavioral, etc. needs)
- Confirm receipt of all permission slips.

THE DAY BEFORE (final planning steps):

- Review plans, schedules, checklists.
- Organize and double-check paperwork (key contact information, permission slips, medical release forms, etc.)
- Duplicate and distribute maps and parking information for the bus driver and/or other drivers (include phone numbers for key contacts).
- Review behavior expectations with your group.
- Pre-assign students to groups of 10 (or number suggested by your park contact)
- Assign chaperone(s) to each group.

THE DAY OF YOUR VISIT:

- Bring permission slips and parent contact information.
- Bring instructions for any child on medication or who may require special medical attention.
- Distribute student nametags.
- Organize student into their groups before arriving at the park.
- Determine where in the park you'll gather for lunch. (Ask your park contact)

Additional Resources

ACTIVITY GUIDE

Do-it-yourself activities to use before, during, and after your visit

The following activities provide effective, educational, and fun ways to address a variety of themes and goals. All of the lessons can take place outside and may be adjusted to the age and ability of your group.

Tips for Managing Your Group:

- ◆ Gather students using phrases like, “Make a “toe/elbow-touching circle.”
- ◆ Ask a student to keep track of the group’s time record to encourage speedy gathering time.
- ◆ Use a harmonica or noisemaker to signal the students back to the circle formation.
- ◆ Explain that when the students are in a circle, it is like the indoor classroom where everyone is accountable for maintaining respect, i.e., raising hands, listening, sitting or standing still.

ANYTIME ACTIVITIES (Use these before, during, or after your park visit)

CREATE-A-CRITTER

Materials: notebooks or journals, pens, crayons or colored pencils

Result: Students begin to understand “adaptations” and how those characteristics help animals to survive.

Procedure: Introduce the scientific idea of adaptation by choosing one animal and discussing its characteristics, predator and/or prey, and the traits it uses to survive in its habitat/home. An adaptation is a characteristic of a living thing that slowly developed to help the organism survive in its environment. Then, the students work in pairs to draw an imaginary animal in its environment and write about its adaptations, the predators and/or prey, defense mechanisms, habitat, and any other creative facts. They should make-up a name for their critter and then present it to the class.

Age Adjustments: Older students can work in pairs first, then in groups to discuss how the two invented critters would interact. Or, students can write a story about their critters with the scenario that it was once endangered, but is now rehabilitated.

WATERSHED MAP

Materials: large leaf, green, blue and black washable markers, spray bottle

Result: Students begin to understand the meaning of watersheds and how humans affect them. Students brainstorm how they can reduce water pollution

Procedure: Introduce the definition of watersheds, using a leaf as a scientific model. (Smaller veins are tributaries, larger veins represent rivers, stem is the ocean). A watershed is the area of land that drains water to a common point. Students draw a picture of their neighborhood with a green washable marker. Then, they add the water features in or near their home in blue marker. With a black marker, they draw a circle in areas where pollution may occur. Finally, they spray their paper with water and then lift the paper to face them. Pollution in one area affects all the water, animals, and plants downstream. Observe, then discuss the effects and possible solutions.

For older students: Redo maps showing specific sources of pollution and write letters to the community suggesting ways to reduce the pollution, e.g., organic farming, proper disposal of motor oil.

FISHIES, FISHIES, COME SWIM IN MY OCEAN

Result: Students work together and begin to understand the ocean food web.

Procedure: Create large boundaries for this running game. Introduce the concept of food webs: the interconnected passing of energy from one organism to another. Choose a couple of students to be “it” as sharks/predators. Everyone else is a fish/prey and lines up shoulder to shoulder behind one boundary. Sharks say, “fishies, fishies, come swim in my ocean” and they try to tag the fishes. If a fish is tagged, s/he stays in that same spot and becomes a sea anemone (or scavenger: eats small bits of residual meat). The sea anemones can tag the fishes as they run by, but without moving their feet. If a fish is tagged by an anemone, s/he becomes an anemone as well.

Age Adjustments: For older students, add and discuss different scenarios, such as over-fishing, and choose a few fish students to automatically “die” to become anemones.

SKUNK BALL

Materials: blindfold, rolled socks or soft object

Result: Students work together to implement a communication strategy. Students learn the definition of nocturnal: active at night.

Procedure: Introduce the characteristic of skunks as nocturnal creatures. For this challenge two skunks will be competing for food and they need help. Students are split into two teams and each team elects a skunk and a speaker. The skunks are blindfolded (to simulate nighttime conditions) and they follow the directions of the speaker to find their food (rolled up socks or soft object.) The speaker is the only person who can talk, but the speaker has her back to the skunk. She faces the rest of the team who use a non-verbal communication strategy to show her the correct directions, which she conveys to the skunk. The first skunk to find the object wins.

Age Adjustments: For older students, once the skunks find the object, they can try to throw their objects at the other skunk, below the head. The first skunk to hit the other skunk wins. They don't always have to go after their original object.

GLOBAL WARMING TAG

Result: Students begin to understand the basics of global warming.

Procedure: Introduce global warming as an issue affecting the entire planet. Review greenhouse gases and the human activities that cause them. Create a circle boundary and place one cone or object in the middle of the circle and another cone about 10 feet from the circle. Choose one person to be the "modern human" and everyone else is a sunray. The human stands inside the circle and tries to tag the sunrays as they run in and out of the circle (Earth's atmosphere.) If the sunrays make it to the middle cone (Earth) they can rest there for 10 seconds, but then they have to run back to the outside cone (Sun). If they get tagged when they are inside the circle, the sunrays become CO₂ (carbon dioxide) and they stand on the circle boundary able to tag passing sunrays. Discuss the effects of more CO₂ in the atmosphere and how it was harder for the sunrays to escape.

Age Adjustments: For younger kids, use simpler vocabulary like "pollution" instead of "CO₂."

PLANT STAGES GAME

Result: Students begin to understand the stages in a plant's life.

Procedure: Brainstorm various plant foods that we eat; choose foods that represent the different stages of the plant's life. Demonstrate the body movements for each of the stages: seed (squat down), sprout (kneel), plant (stand with hands to the side like

leaves), flower (hands around face), fruit (arms in a circle above head). Everyone starts as a seed and plays rock, paper, scissors (RPS) with a partner. The winner moves to the next stage and does the body movement to find someone else in their same stage to play RPS again. If they become a fruit, they start over as a seed. If they lose a RPS match, they remain at the same stage and find another similar person to play. If they make three life cycles, they become Supreme Life Beings and get to stand on the side and sing "I will Survive!"

Age Adjustments: With older students, discuss how fertilizers affect the growth of plants and redo the game in a super-fast, steroid version.

CRAB TAG

Result: Students compete to replicate the movement and molting of crabs.

Procedure: Create a boundary. Introduce characteristics of crabs, specifically molting. Explain that everyone is "it," but they can only run sideways and they have to tag each other with their "pinchers" by lightly grabbing each other's forearms. If they get tagged, they have to put that arm behind their back. If both arms get tagged, they have to stand at the boundary and say "I'm molting!" three times, then reenter the game. After the third time being tagged, they must stay standing at the boundary, cheering others until one crab is left standing.

Age Adjustments: Discuss cannibalism in Dungeness crabs populations with older students.

RACE FOR THE SUN

Result: Students experience energy flow from the sun to plants and photosynthesis.

Procedure: Review photosynthesis: the process by which green plants turn water and carbon dioxide into food when the plant is exposed to light. Choose a "sun" to stand at one end of the field. Choose two students to be energy-converters, Chlora and Phil. Divide the remaining students into 3 groups: soil, water, CO₂. Spread groups out along a boundary opposite the sun and put out two markers to show the starting point (roots). Chlora and Phil start by grabbing hands with one person from the soil group, running to their starting point, leaving the soil person there, and then running to the water group, and continuing the pattern in soil, water, CO₂ order. The first three people standing at the roots hold hands to form a tree and as more people are added, they branch out in a line toward the sun. The first group to reach the sun wins. However, the teacher can direct the sun to turn around for night and everyone must freeze. Also, there may be floods, insects, fungi, and pollution, and the teacher chooses some students to return to their groups.

Debrief: What is realistic/unrealistic about the game with regard to plant growth?

APPLE EARTH

Materials: apple, small kitchen knife

Result: Students begin to understand that the amount of land available for farming is small in comparison to the size of Earth and is therefore a precious resource.

Procedure: Discuss Earth's human population (6.9 billion) and that people need to eat. Use an apple to represent Earth. Discuss what percentage is water (75%), cut out ¼ of the apple. Discuss where on the Earth it is difficult to farm, cut slivers out of the ¼ of apple to represent desert, high mountains, etc. Ask if it's possible to farm in the center of the Earth. Peel the skin and show students that the skin is all we have left to farm. Ask how should we treat this land. Create skits about how to preserve farmland and why.

Age Adjustments: For young kids, use money similes to talk about percentages.

MAMMAL LAB

Materials: bones, pictures, pelts, owl pellets (sometimes you can find local parks or conservation groups that are willing to bring this to your classroom)

Result: Students learn more about the different native animals that live in their natural spaces.

Procedure: Students examine items from mammal lab and discuss relationships in nature. Class discusses what signs animals leave behind that help us know they were there. Introduce scat and tracks, as well as other clues that tell us what the animal might have been doing (feathers, eaten grass, scratches on trees, etc.)

TRACK STORY BOARDS

Materials: animal track stencils, colored pens, large white piece of paper, large sticky notes (Post-its)

Result: Students understand predator/prey relationships and how to identify animal signs.

Procedure: Divide students into groups of 3 to 5. Each group gets a large piece of white paper representing a part of a trail or park, colored pens, and a few different track stencils. Using as many signs and clues as possible, students create a "story" (no words allowed) using the different animal track stencils in front of them. They try to stump their instructors. Have students think about why their animals are there, what they are doing, where they are going, if they are following/chasing another animal, etc. When students are finished, instructors will have to use their own tracking skills to figure out what the animals on the paper were doing.

LEARNING GAIT (OR HOW ANIMALS WALK)

Materials: blue and red construction paper cut into circles (laminated), foam backing to hold in place.

Result: Students are able to identify the gaits of different animals, which helps students learn where and how to look for tracks.

Procedure: Instructor uses colored circles to represent the front (red) and hind (blue) paws of animals. By placing the circles on the ground to replicate the gaits of different animals, students can try for themselves to walk like that animal, placing their hands and feet on the appropriate colors. (This activity complements the "Track Story Boards." Students can try out the different gaits while they are drawing them.)

Research the different gaits of animals at www.octrackers.com/trackpatterns.htm

PREDATOR/PREY RED-LIGHT, GREEN-LIGHT

Result: Students practice the different ways that animals walk (as learned in the last activity)

Procedure: Instructor ("prey") stands on one side of room with his or her back to everyone. Students stand at the other side of the room in a line.

Instructor calls out a predator and students have to walk like that predator towards the instructor. Students can move forward freely until instructor turns around to face them, then everyone must freeze in place. Students that move must go back to the line. Students who are able to tag the instructor without being caught become "prey" as well and turn around when instructor turns.

HOW MUCH OF EARTH IS MADE OF WATER?

Materials: earth blow-up ball

Result: Students understand that 75% Earth surface is covered with water.

Procedure: Instructor throws earth ball to each student one at a time. Student must look at where his/her thumbs land, and call out whether thumbs were on land, water, or both. Generally, the number of waters is around 3 times as much as the number of lands called out, reflecting the fact that 75% of Earth is covered in water.

DIRTY THE BAY

Materials: tub filled with fresh water, containers (labeled) representing different pollutants, “pollution for containers” (oil, coffee, Jell-O, food coloring, etc.)

Result: Students understand point pollution and how humans affect water quality in our local watershed.

Procedure: Show how land use creates pollution in our water systems. Using a tub of clean water as the Bay, instructor tells the history of the people living around the bay, using students as props in story. Instructor passes out labeled containers to students. As instructor tells the story of the bay, the students drop the contents of their containers (pollution) into the tub of water when their label is called. Instructor asks at interims “Would you drink this water?” “Would you swim in this water?”

WATER CYCLE BRACELETS (K-5th grades)

Materials: beads, containers for separate colored beads, string, scissors

Result: Students become familiar with the different stages of the water cycle.

Procedure: Each child makes a water cycle bracelet using string and the following colors of beads to represent the water cycle: dark blue (ocean), yellow (sun), clear (evaporation), white (condensation), light blue (precipitation), brown (groundwater), turquoise (rivers and streams).

Containers of beads are set out in a circle with pictures representing the water cycle. Students become water molecules, stop at each station to collect a bead, and string the beads in order onto the elastic cord and tie off.

PARK ACTIVITIES (Use these during your visit)

TRACKING GAME

Materials: fake scat and tracks, ID guides, pictures of scat or tracks (Available from Acorn Naturalist. See “Online Resources.”)

Result: Students learn to look for and identify scat and tracks.

Procedure: Use images or molds of fake tracks and scat and hide these in an open field. Keep track of where you put them! Talk about scat and tracks and show students what they look like. Talk about opposable thumbs, retractable claws, etc. Have students go out into field and try to find fake scat and tracks. Give them guides and have them identify what they find.

STICK DRAG

Materials: stick

Result: Students learn to use their senses to track animals (improves observation skills)

Procedure: Send staff or volunteer down a trail dragging a stick and then hide. Have students try to track the volunteer by finding the stick drag marks. As kids become better at this, make the drag more complicated.

PREDATOR AND SPRAY

Materials: spray bottle, blindfold

Result: Students improve their understanding of predator-prey relationships.

Procedure: Have students stalk a blindfolded prey. The prey sprays at anything it senses. If they spray the predator they successfully “ran away” and the predator has to sit out. If the predator manages to tag the prey without being sprayed, they were eaten and the predator becomes the prey.

STREAM STUDY PROGRAM

Materials: flex tanks, nets, clear plastic cups, pond life identification guides, magnified viewers, PondWater Tour (for older students) (Materials available from Acorn Naturalist See “Online Resources.”)

Result: Students are able to identify insects, larvae, and amphibians that live in park watersheds. Students will be able to assess if water is polluted as indicated by the life they find in the streams.

Procedure: Talk about the water cycle and discuss your local watershed. What kind of things can pollute water? Certain insects and amphibians indicate water quality. Separate students into groups of 3 or 4 and ask them to collect as many different specimens as they can from the pond to put in their flex tanks. Hand out nets and containers. Let them look at tadpoles, nymphs, and larvae. Gather interesting animals in the viewers for students to identify (older students) and look at more closely. At the end, decide what was found and make a decision: is the water polluted or not? Discuss why it is important to have healthy watersheds.

Age Adjustments: Older groups should concentrate more on making hypotheses and scientific study. PondWater Tour (for older students): Hand out a different experiment (and testing supplies) to each group. Compare results to Color Result Chart when they are finished, and talk about what the results mean to that stream/pond.

SOLO HIKE

Materials: cards, pictures, poems

Result: Students hike a small bit of trail alone and practice using their senses.

Procedure: Pre-hike a small piece of trail that is away from major hiking traffic. Lay down cards every 12 feet that give the students specific things to smell, hear, feel, or learn about the natural environment. Be sure to clearly mark (or place a chaperone at) any major junctions. Have one instructor at the end of the trail and one at the beginning, to send off a new student on the hike every 2 to 3 minutes. Make sure students understand that they are not supposed to team up, and if someone is at a card, they should wait until that student moves to the next card.

PLANT SCIENTIST (for older kids)

Materials: paper, pencils, hand lenses, a place with several different trees

Result: Students learn basic observation skills and plant identification methods.

Procedure: Have students pick a tree. Ask students to investigate the leaves, flowers (if any), seeds/acorns, and invent a name for their plant. Students present their conclusions to the group. Then the leader, or other adult, fills in the actual name and other facts.

FIND THE COLOR! (for younger kids)

Materials: paper (paint-sample cards work really well and are available at hardware stores), fabric, or crayons of varying colors

Result: Encourage students to explore their natural surroundings.

Procedure: Give each student a piece of paper, fabric, or crayon. Student must find a plant that is the closest shade to that color. They then try to find out what the plant is.

SECRET SPOT NATURE JOURNALS

Result: Students begin to understand and feel a connection to the Earth.

Procedure: Introduce nature journals as a very useful tool used by many famous naturalists and scientists. Introduce the idea of a “secret spot”—a place far away from anybody else, no talking, just listening, relaxing, observing, and writing/drawing. Students can revisit their secret spot to observe changes, have some time alone, and to connect with nature. Provide students with a paper journal, pencil, and a specific task or question. State the boundaries and allow an extended amount of quiet time in their spot. Some prompting ideas: “How are you connected to trees/Earth?” “Why did you choose this spot?” “Describe/draw what you see/hear/feel/smell” “Imagine you came to this place for the first time from another country, how would you feel?” If students “finish,” prompt them to find an object and draw it with labels.

MEET A TREE

Materials: blindfolds

Result: Students will be encouraged to use senses to explore and learn about natural surroundings.

Procedure: Kids work in pairs; they take turns blindfolding and then introducing each other to a tree. When kids are un-blindfolded, they must find the tree that they met.

*“The world is mud-luscious and
puddle-wonderful.”*

– e.e. cummings



GLOSSARY

adaptation

any characteristic of a living thing that slowly developed to help the organism survive in its environment

cooperating association

independent, non-profit charitable organizations with a contract with state parks, dedicated to enhancing the educational and interpretive programs in California State Parks

docent

volunteer who leads guided tours

endangered

species threatened by extinction

extinct

species no longer exists

food web

interconnected passing of energy from one organism to another

habitat

home environment

interpreter

interpreters introduce visitors to important natural, cultural and, historical resources at parks. They forge emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in a particular resource.

naturalist

person who studies natural history

nocturnal

active at night

park aide

state park aides perform routine, public contact work, staff park entrance stations, provide information to the public, keep facilities clean and orderly, and drive light vehicles

photosynthesis

process green plants use to turn water and carbon dioxide into food when the plant is exposed to light

predator

hunts other animals for food

prey

hunted by other animals

ranger

Peace officer who performs a wide variety of law enforcement activities; other duties include interpretation of natural, historic, and cultural resources, resource protection, park management, and patrol

scavenger

feeds on dead plants or animals

stewardship

careful and responsible management of natural resources and habitats

volunteer

volunteers serve in almost all of California's state park units and lend invaluable assistance in interpretation, public information and safety, operations, maintenance, as well as natural and cultural resource management

watershed

an area of land that drains water to a common point

zero-waste lunch

lunch packed in a reusable sack/bag, with reusable (rather than single-use) food containers and a water bottle or thermos

TIPS FOR PARENTS

Dear Parents,

Your help is invaluable in preparing students for a successful park visit. Here are some ways to help ensure your child enjoys and gets the most out of a field trip.

Shoes Make sure your child wears sturdy shoes that will stay on and cover toes. No sandals, thin-soled or slip-on shoes.

Clothing Students should bring clothes that they can layer to accommodate to changing temperatures (e.g., t-shirt, long-sleeve shirt, and a sweatshirt rather than a coat). Make sure students wear clothes and shoes that are not only comfortable, but that they may get dirty.

Food Students should not bring their own food on overnight camping trips. No food is allowed in the tents, and all meals are provided on site. If a student has specific dietary restrictions, and must bring their own food, please give it to the teachers upon trip departure. For day visits, consider packing a zero-waste lunch* for your child.

If your child is camping overnight, check with your teacher for a list of items needed.

What to leave at home iPods, phones, and other electronic devices should be left at home, along with any other valuable personal items (jewelry). This helps to eliminate distractions and the chance for loss of, or damage to, personal items.

Follow-up visit Plan on making a post visit to the park with the family. The students will be excited to show off their new knowledge, and it makes for a fun family outing.

* Lunch packed in a reusable sack/bag, with reusable (rather than single-use) food containers and a water bottle or thermos.

CONSEJOS PARA PADRES

Estimados padres,

Es importante que ayudemos a preparar a los estudiantes para que su visita al parque sea exitosa. Su colaboración es muy valiosa. A continuación les ofrecemos algunos consejos para asegurarnos de que sus hijos disfruten de los field trips y los aprovechen al máximo.

Calzado Asegúrese de que los niños lleven puestos zapatos/zapatillas fuertes que no se les salgan y que les cubran los dedos. No los envíe con sandalias ni con zapatos de suela fina ni con zapatos sin agujetas/cordones.

Ropa Los estudiantes deben traer prendas de vestir que puedan ponerse o quitarse para estar cómodos con los cambios de temperatura (por ejemplo, puede enviarlos con una camiseta, una camisa de manga larga y una sudadera en lugar de un saco).

Asegúrese de que los estudiantes usen ropa y zapatos que además de ser cómodos, no haya problema si se ensucian.

Comida Los estudiantes no deben llevar comida a los campamentos donde pasarán la noche. No se permite tener comida en las tiendas de campaña; todos los alimentos serán provistos en el campamento. Si un estudiante tiene restricciones específicas en su dieta, y debe traer su propia comida, por favor entréguele esa comida a los maestros justo antes de partir hacia el campamento. Si es un field trip corto durante el día, puede empacarle un almuerzo que luego no tenga que desecharse*.

Qué cosas deben quedarse en casa A los field trips no se deben traer iPods, teléfonos ni aparatos electrónicos, así como tampoco ningún artículo de valor (joyas, etc.). Esto permite que los chicos no tengan distracciones y evitaremos que se pierdan o se dañen artículos personales.

Visita posterior Planifique hacer una visita posterior al parque junto con su familia. A los estudiantes les encantará demostrarles todo lo nuevo que aprendieron, y puede ser una salida divertida para la familia.

* Almuerzo empacado en una bolsa de plástico o bolsa de papel reusable, con recipientes de comida reusables (en lugar de los que se desechan después de usarse) y una botella o termo de agua.

FIELD TRIP PERMISSION FORM

_____ [your organization or school name]

I _____ hereby certify that I am the legal Parent/Guardian
(Parent/Guardian Name)
of _____, and that I give my consent to allow my child to
(Student Name)
participate in the following [your organization or school name] sponsored activity:

Name of Activity: _____

Date: _____ to _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

For said participation, I do hereby for my child, myself, my heirs, executors and administrator, fully release and discharge the _____, its officers, agents, and employees from all claims, demands, and causes of action of any kind whatsoever which may be sustained as a result of my child's participation in the aforementioned _____ – sponsored activity.
[your organization or school name]

For said participation, in the event of an emergency, I do hereby give my consent to the physician selected by the [your organization or school name] staff to hospitalize, secure proper treatment for, use ambulance, and to order injection, anesthesia, surgery for my child as named on this form.

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

Parent/Guardian Name (please print)

FORMULARIO DE AUTORIZACIÓN PARA EL FIELD TRIP

_____ [nombre de su organización o escuela]

Yo _____, por medio del presente, certifico que soy el
(Nombre del Padre/Madre/Tutor Legal)
de _____, que doy mi consentimiento para y que doy
(Nombre del Estudiante)
consentimiento para autorizar a mi hijo/a participar en la siguiente actividad patrocinada por [nombre de su organización o escuela]:

Nombre de la actividad: _____

Fecha: _____ hasta _____

Hora: _____

Lugar: _____

Para dicha participación, por medio de este formulario y en nombre mío y de mi hijo/a, así como de mis herederos, testamentarios y administrador, descargo y libero completamente a _____ sus directivos, agentes y empleados de todo reclamo, demanda, y fundamentos de demanda, de cualquier tipo, que pudiera iniciarse como resultado de la participación de mi hijo/a en la actividad mencionada anteriormente patrocinada por _____.

Para dicha participación, en el caso de una emergencia, por medio de este formulario doy mi consentimiento al médico seleccionado por el personal de [nombre de su organización o escuela] para hospitalizar, brindar tratamiento médico adecuado, usar servicio de ambulancia, y ordenar inyecciones, anestesia, cirugía para mi hijo/a, cuyo nombre aparece mencionado en este formulario.

Firma del Padre/Madre/Tutor Legal Fecha

Nombre del Padre/Madre/Tutor Legal

CALIFORNIA CHILDREN'S OUTDOOR BILL OF RIGHTS

The Outdoor Bill of Rights, developed by the California Roundtable on Recreation, Parks and Tourism, is designed to encourage California's children to participate in outdoor recreational activities, discover their heritage and, have the opportunity to complete by their 14th year each of the activities included in the Bill.

Members of the Roundtable include recreation, parks and tourism leaders from local, state and federal agencies, private and non-profit organizations, educational institutions and the public.

For more information:
www.calroundtable.org

California Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights

This certificate is presented to _____

for accomplishing the following:

<input type="checkbox"/> Playing in a safe place	<input type="checkbox"/> Camping under the stars
<input type="checkbox"/> Exploring nature	<input type="checkbox"/> Riding a bike
<input type="checkbox"/> Learning to swim	<input type="checkbox"/> Going boating
<input type="checkbox"/> Going fishing	<input type="checkbox"/> Connecting with the past
<input type="checkbox"/> Following a trail	<input type="checkbox"/> Planting a seed

Date _____

Signature _____

Organization _____

ONLINE RESOURCES

California State Parks Planning Tools

Map of California State Parks

A Guide to Environmental Education Programs in California State Parks

www.parks.ca.gov

http://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/735/files/Env_Ed_Matrix2014.pdf

Cooperating Associations

These independent, non-profit charitable organizations are dedicated to enhancing the educational and interpretive programs in California State Parks. A network of more than 80 associations serves most of California's 278 state parks.

www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=977

Educational Guides

Redwood Ed: A guide to the coast redwoods for teachers and learners

By Michael Roa

Teachers or others leading groups on field trips to the coast redwoods may download all or part of Redwood Ed for use in their classes or with their groups.

http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=25535

A Guide to the Side of the Sea:

A teacher's guide for field trips to rocky intertidal areas

By Michael Roa

Teachers or others leading groups on intertidal field trips may download all or part of this A Guide to the Side of the Sea for use in their classes or with their groups. www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=24075

Travel Tools

CalParks iPhone App

Launched in 2011, and regularly updated, this iPhone app features trail systems for over 50 California State Parks. Read about park highlights and history; find the best hikes in each park; navigate trails using detailed maps, descriptions points of interest, photos, and audio. Then share your own experience by tracking your hikes, taking pictures, and uploading to EveryTrail, Facebook, and Twitter. Offers park visitors a detailed, media-rich, interactive, and location-aware experience.

Stay up-to-date with the latest park information. www.calparks.org/travel/iphoneapp.html

Easy Hikes

Discover easy trails and pathways through beaches, hills, and deserts in southern and northern California state parks.

www.parks.ca.gov/pages/24317/files/easyhikesinnorthencalifornia.pdf

EveryTrail

Discover where to go and what to do in some of the best places on earth. EveryTrail is free and it's useful for a wide variety of trips, including road trips, sight-seeing tours, sailing trips, hiking, cycling, flying, hang gliding, geocaching, skiing, kayaking trips and more. EveryTrail has trips from over 80 countries.

www.everytrail.com

Find Recreation

Search for public park and recreation lands throughout California. This easy-to-use, interactive map allows you to search for parks, campgrounds, and trails, from the smallest neighborhood park to the largest national park. Simply type in your address, city, or zip to find outdoor recreation opportunities in your area.

http://findrecreation.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=29098

MyParkPhotos.com

Let this online community (professional photographers, outdoor enthusiasts, and employees of parks and other public lands) inspire your next visit to a California state park. Participants share their photographs – wildlife, wildflowers, landscapes, buildings, people – of the natural diversity, beauty, and cultural heritage of public lands across the U.S. and internationally. www.myparkphotos.com/states/California.html

Trails.com

Search for trails in your area. To start, simply type in your zip code. This site provides trail guides, photos, reviews, and topo maps. Free iPhone app also available.

Transit & Trails

Find trailheads, campgrounds, and featured trips, then get live interactive transit directions to those locations via 511.org or Google Transit. Created by the Bay Area Open Space Council, this online tool help you plan trips to San Francisco Bay Area recreation spots via public transportation. www.transitandtrails.org



Asilomar State Beach ©Stephen Woodward

Travel Tips

Choose a state park by selecting one or more of the following activities or interest areas: Art, Beaches, Biking, Birds, Desert Parks, Dogs, Fall Colors, Family Destinations, Gold, Hidden Treasures, Historic Sites, Missions, Redwoods, Skiing, Trails, Underwater Parks, Waterfalls, Weddings, Whales, Wildflowers. www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=24317

Directories

CREEC Network (California Regional Environmental Education Community) links educators to environmental education activities and resources throughout California. Click the “find your region” tab to search by programs and events by region. Or click the “resource directory” tab to search by county, grade level and/or academic focus. www.creec.org/

Children & Nature Network

A nonprofit organization chaired by Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*. Offers access to a network of educators, researchers, and other interested parties, the latest news and research on this topic, and tips for taking action. www.cnaturenet.org

Children, Nature and You

Free materials, resources and curricula to help connect children to nature. www.childrenandnature.org

Education and the Environment Initiative

With education and a thriving economy at the forefront of the state’s priorities, California’s landmark EEI Curriculum is a national model designed to help prepare today’s students to become future scientists, economists, and green technology leaders. Learn more at: www.calepa.ca.gov/Education/EEI/default.htm

Environmental Education Organizations

American Camp Association

The mission of the American Camp Association is enriching the lives of children, youth and adults through the camp experience. As a leading authority in youth development, ACA works to preserve, promote, and improve the camp experience. www.acacamps.org

Get Outdoors USA

Public-private partnership provides access to online nature exploration and resources for parents to use when taking their children outside. www.getoutdoorsusa.org

Hooked on Nature

Activities children can do to connect with nature, a blog, and links to other movements and research. www.hookedonnature.org/connectingnature.html

Kidsgardening.org

Offers resources for teachers and parents, including information on grants. Site provides link to affiliated store. www.kidsgardening.com

National Wildlife Federation,

See the organization’s “How we Connect Kids and Nature” www.nwf.org

North American Association for Environmental Education

Professional association for environmental educators. Provides information on professional development activities for environmental educators and a national clearinghouse of resources, programs and initiatives. www.naaee.org

Project WET

Educate. Empower. Act. The mission of Project WET is to reach children, parents, educators, and communities of the world with water education. www.projectwet.org

Project WILD

Conservation and environmental education programs for educators of students in kindergarten through high school. www.projectwild.org

Sharing Nature Foundation

Information on programs for adult leaders, books and resources, Flow Learning™, and Sharing Nature Worldwide activities. www.sharingnature.com/NatureActivities.html

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Let’s Go Outside

Resources, ideas, and activities for parents, teachers, and kids. www.fws.gov/letsgooutside/

Other

Acorn Naturalists

Develops and distributes kits, games, activity books, field identification guides, water quality monitoring equipment, audiovisual media, and hundreds of tools and supplies for educators, naturalists, interpreters, science education specialists, outdoor schools and camp staff, hikers, birders, botanists, parents and their children. www.acornnaturalists.com

RECOMMENDED READING

Books

Last Child in the Woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder

Richard Louv

A Natural Sense of Wonder: Connecting kids with nature through the seasons

Rick Van Noy

Sharing Nature with Children

Joseph Cornell

Ask your park contact or cooperating association for specific reading lists. Some parks publish their own books and educational materials.

Available online

Afterschool Alliance (2010). *America After 3PM Special Report on Summer: Missed Opportunities, Unmet Demand*. www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM_summer.cfm

This report includes state-by-state and national polling information on access and participation in summer learning programs. Report finds that the nation is missing a key opportunity to help millions of children succeed in school through summer learning.

American Camp Association.

www.acacamps.org/research

Executive summaries from national research projects undertaken by ACA highlight the research findings related to outcomes and the supports and opportunities needed for quality youth development programs as well as suggestions for practice. The information is evidence of the value of the camp experience for positive youth development and establishes the camp experience as a site for development and learning.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2010). The association between school-based physical activity, including physical education, and academic performance. www.cdc.gov/healthyYouth

National Environmental Education

Foundation. www.neefusa.org

NEEF's website includes highlights of published literature supporting the health benefits of the natural environment.

National Summer Learning

Association. www.summerlearning.org

Website includes information on planning high-quality programs as well as current literature on the benefits of effective summer learning partnerships.

Partnership for Children and Youth

<http://partnerforchildren.org/reports-publications>

Includes an extensive list of summer learning loss literature.

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