

Welcome to

Los Padres National Forest!



Los Padres National Forest, encompassing almost two million acres, is the third largest National Forest in California. It occupies a major portion of the coastal mountain ranges and extends for about 220 miles from the west boundary of Los Angeles County to mid-Monterey County on the north.

The Forest spans some of the most ruggedly beautiful landscapes to be found anywhere in California. This environment provides wide diversity of plant communities and wildlife habitat. The Forest provides habitat for endangered species, including the California Condor.

The Los Padres is largely unroaded. The Forest provides a scenic backdrop for the communities of Ojai, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo. The Forest also borders the Big Sur coast in Monterey County.

Visitors are attracted to the Los Padres by the variety of terrain, vegetation, and recreational settings which include ocean beaches, sub-alpine forest, chaparral, desert badlands, and riparian areas. The Forest is heavily used by residents of communities extending from the San Francisco Bay area to the Los Angeles basin. The Big Sur area, on the beautiful Monterey coastline, is a national and international attraction which is visited by millions of travelers each year.

Recreation Opportunities

There are 109 developed sites on the Forest including family and group campgrounds, picnic and day use areas, beaches and swimming sites, and scenic overlooks. The Chula Vista Winter Sports Area on Mt. Pinos offers excellent opportunities for cross-country skiing and snow play activities.

The Forest contains 1,680 miles of trails which offer numerous recreation opportunities for the hiker, backpacker, equestrian, mountain bicyclist, and off-highway vehicle enthusiast. These trails vary in length and difficulty.

Visitors find a variety of experiences ranging from leisurely two hour day trips to week-long excursions deep into the backcountry.

Los Padres National Forest has ten designated wilderness areas comprising 875,000 acres. These include the Ventana on the Monterey Ranger District; the Silver Peak on the Monterey District; the Santa Lucia on the Santa Lucia Ranger District; the Machesna Mountain on the Santa Lucia District; the Garcia on the Santa Lucia Ranger District; the San Rafael on both the Santa Lucia and Santa Barbara Ranger Districts; and the Dick Smith on the Santa Barbara and Mt. Pinos Ranger Districts; the Matilija on the Ojai Ranger District; the Sespe on both the Ojai and Mt. Pinos Ranger Districts; and the Chumash on the Mt. Pinos Ranger District.

Other popular activities include pleasure driving, viewing scenery, hunting, fishing, primitive camping, horseback riding, off-highway vehicle use, nature photography, rock climbing and hang-gliding. All of our offices maintain a variety of guides, publications and maps to help you enjoy your visit to Los Padres National Forest.

Ecosystem Management

The Los Padres National Forest was originally established to protect vital Forest watersheds and adjacent communities from the threat of wildfires. This remains our principle mission today. During your visit to Los Padres National Forest you might encounter evidence of prescribed burning. Los Padres National Forest is one of the most wildfire prone Forests in the entire National Forest System with an average annual acreage burned by wildfire in excess of 20,000 acres. Prescribed burning is used to reduce the average age and density of chaparral. This results in smaller, less intense wildfires which, in turn, cause less resource damage and are less expensive to suppress.

Other management activities and land uses occurring on the Forest include fish and wildlife habitat projects, cattle grazing on range allotments, mineral extraction and oil and gas developments, electronic sites, water developments, and wood cutting. The Forest's timber program

emphasizes timber stand improvement and reforestation to promote a healthy Forest for visual and recreation values. There is very little commercial harvesting, and wood is mostly sold for firewood.

For More Information

Forest Homepage address:
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/lospadres>

If you would like more information or detailed maps of the Los Padres National Forest, please contact:

Los Padres National Forest

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Ojai Ranger District

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Monterey Ranger District

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Santa Barbara Ranger District

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Mt. Pinos Ranger District

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