

# Castle Crags

## State Park



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The mission of California State Parks is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



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#### **Castle Crags State Park**

**20022 Castle Creek Road**

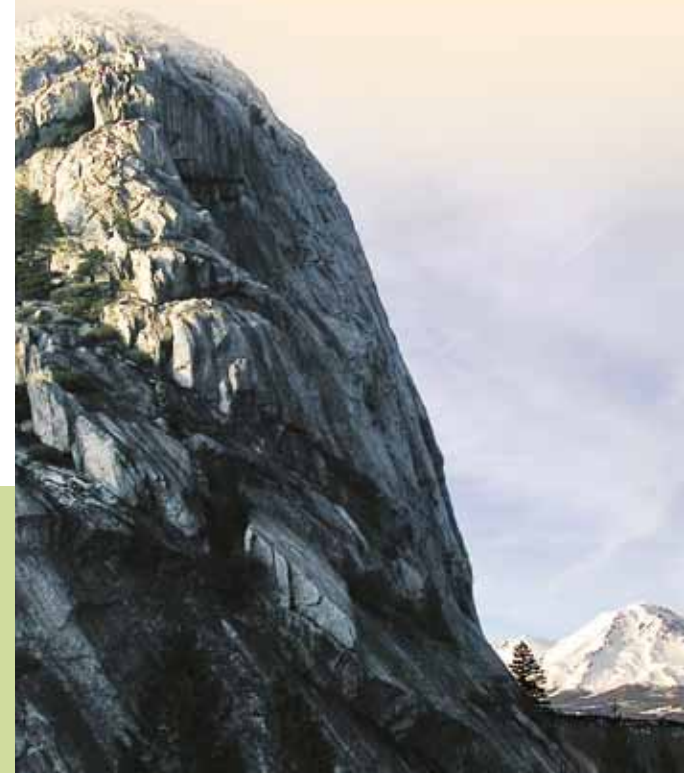
**Castella, CA 96017**

**(530) 235-2684**

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*The lofty spires and granite dome of Castle Crags rise to more than 6,500 feet.*

*The grandeur of the crags has been revered as an extraordinary place for millennia.*



**M**ajestic Castle Crags have inspired enduring myths and legends since prehistoric times.

More than 170 million years old, these granite formations in the Castle Crags Wilderness border the northwestern edge of Castle Crags State Park.

Located at the north end of Sacramento Valley off Interstate 5, the park has average high temperatures above 90° in the summer, dipping to the low 20s in winter.

**PARK HISTORY**

**Native People**

The forested area of Castle Crags State Park was used by several native groups. Ancestral home to the Okwanuchu Shasta people, the conspicuous crags were also revered by the indigenous Californians surrounding them—including the Wintu, Achumawi and Modoc people. The Okwanuchu Shasta believed that spirits took human forms to live in rocks, cliffs and mountaintops such as the crags.

The Okwanuchu Shasta territory covered about 700 square miles of forested mountains from the headwaters of the Sacramento River to the McCloud River and from Mount Shasta to Pollard Flat. The abundant local riverine and terrestrial resources ensured their success as hunters and gatherers.

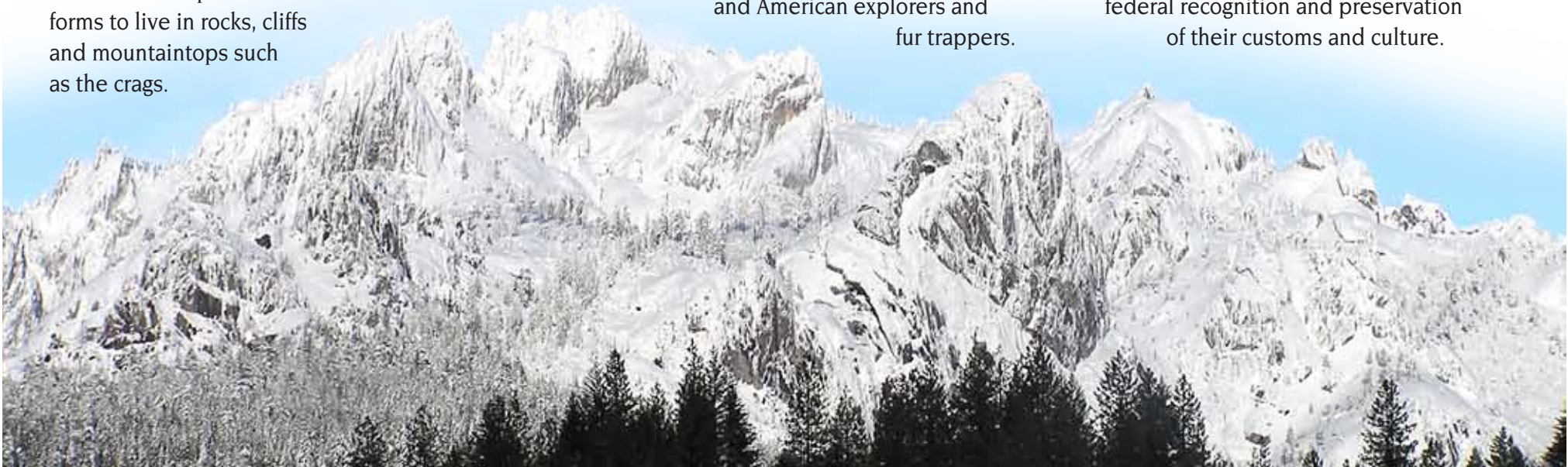
Plentiful salmon and other fish in what is now the Sacramento River and its tributaries could be eaten fresh or dried and stored for winter months. Harvested nuts from oaks and pines provided year-round sustenance, and bulbs, roots, greens, berries and grasses were gathered seasonally. Strong trading ties with their neighbors yielded obsidian from the Achumawi to the east and abalone and dentalia shells from their western coastal neighbors, the Karok, Yurok and Hupa.

Beginning in the late 1820s, the territories and lifeways of all native groups were changed by the arrival of European and American explorers and fur trappers.

A malaria epidemic brought by European fur trappers wiped out much of the Okwanuchu Shasta populace by 1833.

With the 1848 gold discoveries at the Trinity River and Sutter's Mill, sojourners from around the world flocked to California, invading the original homelands and disturbing the life-sustaining resources of the native people. This invasion also led to displacement of indigenous people. More than two-thirds of the native California Indian people died as a result of the conquest with its violence and contagious diseases—among them, many Okwanuchu Shasta, Wintu and Modoc people from this area. By the 1920s, surviving Okwanuchu Shasta were taken to other areas as slaves or put on reservations. Some were removed as far north as the Umatilla Reservation in northeastern Oregon.

Today, the Okwanuchu Shasta and Wintu descendants work toward restored federal recognition and preservation of their customs and culture.



## The Battle of Castle Crag

A false rumor of a “Lost Cabin Mine” brought hordes of gold seekers here in 1853. Poet Joaquin Miller, who had married a Wintu and lived among the native people, wrote, “The gold-diggers had so muddied and soiled the waters the season before that the annual run of salmon had failed, the Indians had for the first time in centuries no stores of dried salmon, and they were starving to death by hundreds.”

The miners’ debris choked the waterways—primary source of sustenance for the indigenous people. Whites subsequently attacked hungry Modocs for stealing flour, triggering the Battle of Castle Crag in 1855. The site, between Castle Lake and a formation now known as Battle Rock (in the northwestern crags formation), became California Historical Landmark No. 116 in 1984. A plaque near the park entrance commemorates the conflict between Modocs, Wintu, Okwanuchu Shasta, and white settlers.

Discouraged by the untrue mine rumor, gold searchers eventually left. Other mineral, timber and lumber industries moved into this heavily forested area. During the late 1800s, Bailey’s Castle Rock Springs Hotel attracted visitors, and the Castle Rock Springs mineral water bottling plant operated here until 1929.

## Becoming a State Park

Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. surveyed the state for public park sites in 1928. This unique area was suggested for state acquisition. Bond

funds and donations were used to purchase 925 acres in 1933. That same year, 220 men from the federal Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp in Castella began building the park’s roads, trails, infrastructure and buildings in the “park rustic” style of native wood and stone.

In 1959, most of the CCC-era structures were demolished to allow the Interstate 5 freeway to run through the original park. Some local rock “Diablo stoves” in campsites remain, as



*CCC crewmen excavating the site of a spring, July 1935*

well as the CCC-built rock surround for the park’s mineral spring.

Covering nearly 4,000 acres today, Castle Crag State Park is considered outstanding for its natural features and representative for the six regional ecological habitats that converge here.

## NATURAL HISTORY

Dominated by montane hardwood-coniferous forest habitat interspersed with meadows,

riparian areas, and montane chaparral, this park provides habitat for a variety of species. Two endemic plant species, the Castle Crag harebell and Castle Crag ivesia, are known to grow in the park, as well as stands of Port Orford cedar. Calypso, spotted coral root and phantom orchids are among 13 species of wild orchids found in the park.

A remarkable diversity of animals live here. Black bears seek berries, and mountain lions, bobcats and coyotes hunt in higher elevations. Rarely, visitors may see a spotted skunk, a fisher or a ringtail.

Pileated woodpeckers are often heard hammering in the trees. The American dipper, the only aquatic songbird, can often be heard and seen foraging along the banks, while osprey routinely patrol the skies above looking for a trout.

Corvids (jays and ravens) constantly search for food. Western bluebirds and meadowlarks nest in the park’s riparian vegetation. Red-tailed and Cooper’s hawks catch updrafts above the rare weeping spruce forest nestled among the crags.

## Faces of the Crag

The Pleistocene glaciation, ending 10 to 12,000 years ago, and the granite’s enduring resistance to erosion have left these spires and domes.



Depending on the time of day and the sun's shadows, look for hidden "faces" carved by snow and ice into the granite surfaces. Precipitation freezes in the cracks and crevasses, constantly changing the crag faces.



*Climbers scale "Ogre Face," Mt. Hubris*

## RECREATION

**Hiking**—Ask at the park kiosk for a handout describing more than 30 miles of hiking trails that wind through the park and into the adjoining Castle Crag Wilderness, managed by the U.S. Forest Service.

**Fishing**—Licensed anglers may catch and release trout in Castle Creek and the Sacramento River. For regulations, see

[www.dfg.ca.gov](http://www.dfg.ca.gov).

**Camping**—Reserve one of more than 60 developed campsites at [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov) or call (800) 444-7275.

Riverside Campground has 12

campsites and is open seasonally on a first-come, first-served basis. Interpretive campfire programs are held in the summer.

**Day Use**—A tunnel below the highway and a pedestrian suspension bridge across the river lead to the picnic area. Restrooms and drinking water are nearby. Vista Point also has picnic tables with a nearby vault toilet, but no piped water.

## ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

One campsite is accessible. Paved Vista Point Trail leads .25 miles to views of Castle Crag, Mt. Shasta and Gray Rocks. Parking and a restroom are accessible.

For accessibility updates, visit the website at <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

## NEARBY STATE PARKS

- McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial SP  
24898 Highway 89, Burney 96013  
(530) 335-2777
- Ahjumawi Lava Springs State Park  
N 41.1000° W 121.4120° (Reachable only by small watercraft) c/o McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial SP

## PLEASE REMEMBER

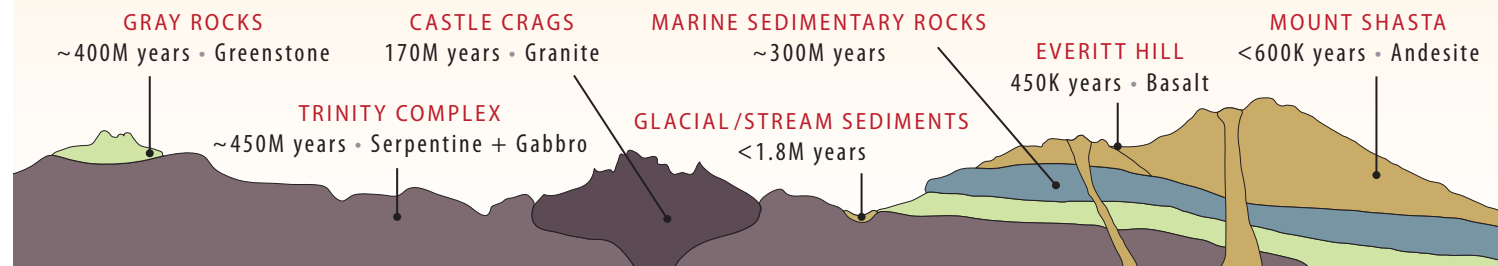
- All natural and cultural features are protected by law and may not be disturbed or removed. Stay on trails.
- Except for trained service animals, dogs are not allowed on trails. They are allowed in campsites. Dogs must be under adult control on a six-foot maximum leash and must be confined to a tent or vehicle at night.
- Quiet hours are 10 p.m. to 8 a.m. Noise should never travel beyond your camp.
- Use bear-resistant lockers for storage.
- Do not feed birds or other wildlife.

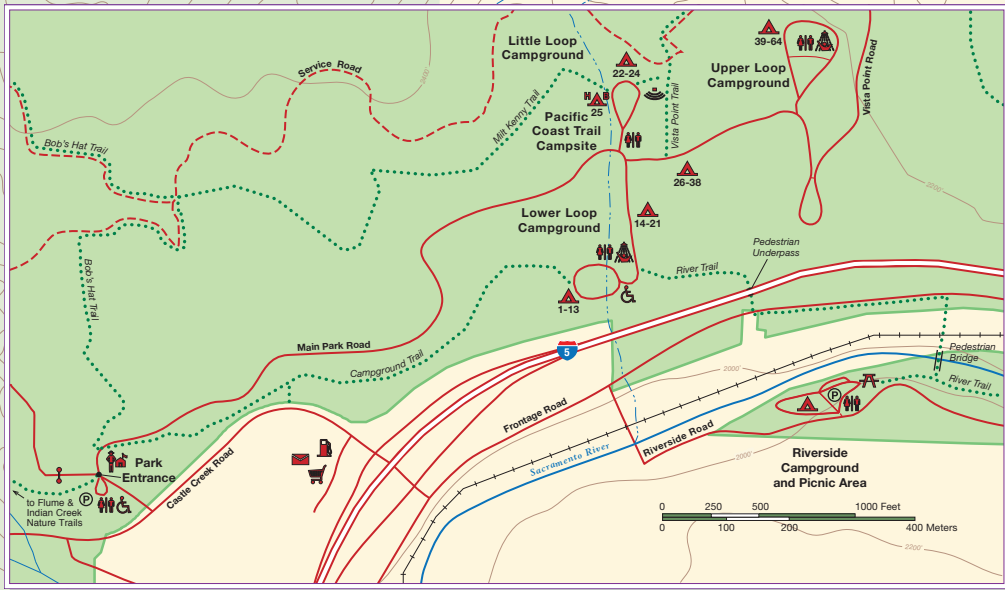
## HOW THE CRAGS WERE FORMED

Earth's surface is covered by slowly moving plates of dense rock. The rocks surrounding Castle Crag are part of an oceanic plate that collided with North America several hundred million years ago. Since then, younger oceanic plates have slid down beneath the western

edge of the continent and carried water deep into the Earth. This water causes hot rocks in the planet's mantle to melt; these melts rise towards the surface, where some erupt to form volcanoes like Mount Shasta. About 170 million years ago, a batch of this molten

rock rose, collected beneath Earth's surface and solidified to form the Castle Crag granite. Since then, uplift of the Klamath Mountains, combined with weathering and erosion by streams and glaciers, have exposed and sculpted the Crag.





# Castle Crag State Park

- Legend**
- Interstate Highway
  - Paved Road
  - Unpaved/Service Road
  - Trail: Hike
  - Trail: Hike & Horse
  - Accessible Trail
  - Railroad
  - Accessible Feature
  - Bridge
  - Campfire Center
  - Campground
  - Environmental Camp
  - Gas Station
  - Locked Gate
  - Parking
  - Picnic Area
  - Post Office
  - Ranger Station
  - Restroom
  - Shower
  - Supplies
  - Trailhead
  - Viewpoint

