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A soulful stroll through San Pedro Valley County Park

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Valley View Trail vista

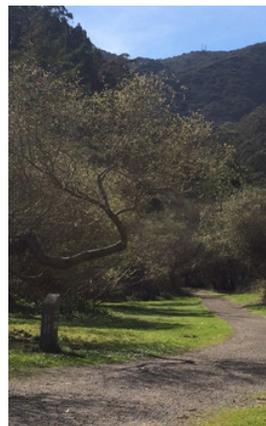
Beverly Mann

Bay Area residents and visitors looking to escape the crowds and stressful city life don't have far to travel for a mental respite. Just off of the exquisite California coastline, nestled in the Santa Cruz Mountain Range at the foothills of **Pacifica**, are hidden stretches of scenic trails for the beginner to veteran hiker at **San Pedro Valley County Park**.

The 1,100 acres of endless greenery is enlivened by a diversity of flora and fauna, several year-round creeks, self-guided nature trails, and scenic Brook Falls in San Mateo's precious coastal town. It is quite frequent to see turkey vultures and hawks soaring overhead, come in full view of deer, brush rabbits, and raccoons. During spring season, the meadows a

coastline are miraculously laden with wildflowers, and rare plants— such as giant golden chinquapin and western leatherwood, to name a few. Don't be stunned to see a bobcat or gopher snake appear out from nowhere.

Just after entering, stop by the Visitor Center for information and maps on trails, and get a sneak preview of the park's rich natural history at the tiny bookstore and library. Each month there are talks presented by Friends of San Pedro Valley to educate visitors on the richness of these surroundings.



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It all started in 1769 when explorer Captain Gaspar de Portola was in search of Monterey Bay and discovered San Pedro Valley which became an important link to the Spanish Missions for some valuable resources. The park was an outpost for cattle grazers and provided the fertile soil to produce wheat, fruits, and vegetables. The South Bank is a seasonal water source for the city today.

Hiking Trails:

- **Plasken Nature Trail**, the shortest trail of .1 miles, crosses two short bridges along the South Fork of San Pedro Creek with a lineup of signs describing the fauna and flora found within the park. It's right behind the Visitor Center.
- **Old Trout Farm Trail** is an approximate one-mile loop, and an uphill and downhill trek shaded by trees with calming sounds of running water from the adjacent creek. A pleasant walk for beginners as well as veteran hikers.
- **Weiler Ranch Trail** is one mile each way along a more expansive stretch of greenery banked by the grandeur of mountains in the distance. It is not uncommon to sight a family of deer along the way.
- **Valley View Trail** continues at a 1.6 mile switchback above Weiler Ranch Trail for a more breathtaking landscape view of [Pacifica](#) and the verdant tree-studded mountain range.

Montara Mountain Trail, 2.5 miles one way to the Summit, **Brooks Creek Trail**, one mile, and **Hazelnut Trail**, 3.7 miles, are all reachable in the vicinity of each other and near Old Trout Farm Trail.

Directions: Just a 30-minute drive from San Francisco's Great Highway, take Highway 1, exit on East Linda Mar Boulevard, make a right at Oddstad Boulevard.

Park Hours/ Location:

- Opens 8 am to 5 pm (changes seasonally) with \$6.00 parking fee. Note that seniors get in free Mondays through Friday.
- Located at 600 Oddstad Boulevard, Pacifica, 650-355-8289
- Ranges from easy strolls to challenging climbs
- Reservations for group picnics, call 650-363-4021

Park Rules:

- No pets allowed
- Barbecues are allowed only in barbecue pits using charcoal but no portable barbecues
- No smoking in County [Parks](#), on trails, or at historical sites

Places nearby for lunch, snack, or coffee break:

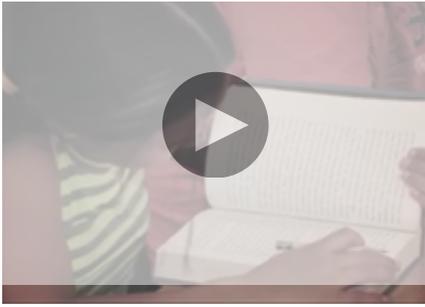
- **Beach Monkey Café** is a great stop for a cappuccino and housemade crispy croissants before or after the hike. Practically everything is made from scratch, with a leaning toward organic. It is in the Adobe Plaza Shopping Center at 986 Linda Mar Boulevard, minutes from the park.
- **Puerto 27 Peruvian Kitchen & Pisco Bar**, enhanced with ceiling to floor glass windows, has the best views of the coastline as well as creative fare featuring Jalea Mixta (crispy calamari, shrimp, and scallops with yucca and black mint tartar sauce and Lomo Saltado (sautéed sirloin steak strips with onion, cilantro, and soy sauce). Try the Chicha Morada, a purple corn cider drink with unforgettable cinnamon accents.
- **Sun Valley Fine Foods** is a grocery store that has a great deli in the back and barbecue every weekend out in front. Good place to stock up for a hike on beverages, snacks, or fresh fruit. Located at 1015 Terra Nova Boulevard at Park Mall Shopping Center which is across the street and opposite the park's main entrance.

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