



Andrew Molera State Park

## 5 Andrew Molera State Park

With an area of 4,766 acres, Andrew Molera is Big Sur's largest state park. Originally a part of a Mexican land grant known as Rancho El Sur, this park was originally a property of Juan Bautista Alvarado. Andrew Molera was the grandson of Juan Bautista Rogers Cooper, a Monterey sea captain and merchant who bought the land from Alvarado. In 1965, Molera's daughter donated the land to the park system in his name. The park boasts 20 miles of trails that give hikers access to the Big Sur River mouth and estuary, the driftwood-strewn Molera Beach, as well as other vibrant ecosystems. The Ventana Wilderness Society operates The Big Sur Ornithology Lab, a research, habitat restoration and education center as well as a bird observatory. Their focus is primarily on Bald Eagles and Condors.

**HOURS** Sunrise to sunset

**DIRECTIONS** From Ventana, drive north on Highway One for 7 miles. The entrance is at the junction of the highway and Old Coast Road on the west side. For non-campers, the park is day-use only. Biking is permitted on Ridge, Beach, Trail Camp and Creamery Meadow trails. Horses are not allowed on the Hidden, Headlands or Spring Trails or in Trail Camp. To reserve a guided horseback tour, contact the Ventana reception desk, or call Molera Horseback Tours at 831.625.5486.

**INFO** 831.667.2315; [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)



## 6 Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park

Big Sur's oldest, most developed and most popular state park, Pfeiffer Big Sur, lies more than a mile inland, along Highway One, and can be a viable escape from the coastal summer fog. This is an excellent place for an easy redwood forest hike or a more demanding climb up Mount Manuel, a picnic or a splash in one of the most beloved Big Sur swimming holes. You must ascend to the top of the peaks for views of the Pacific Ocean.

**HOURS** Sunrise to sunset

**DIRECTIONS** From Ventana, drive north on Highway One for 2.3 miles. The entrance is on the east side of the highway.

**INFO** 831.667.2315; www.parks.ca.gov



Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park



## 7 Pfeiffer Beach

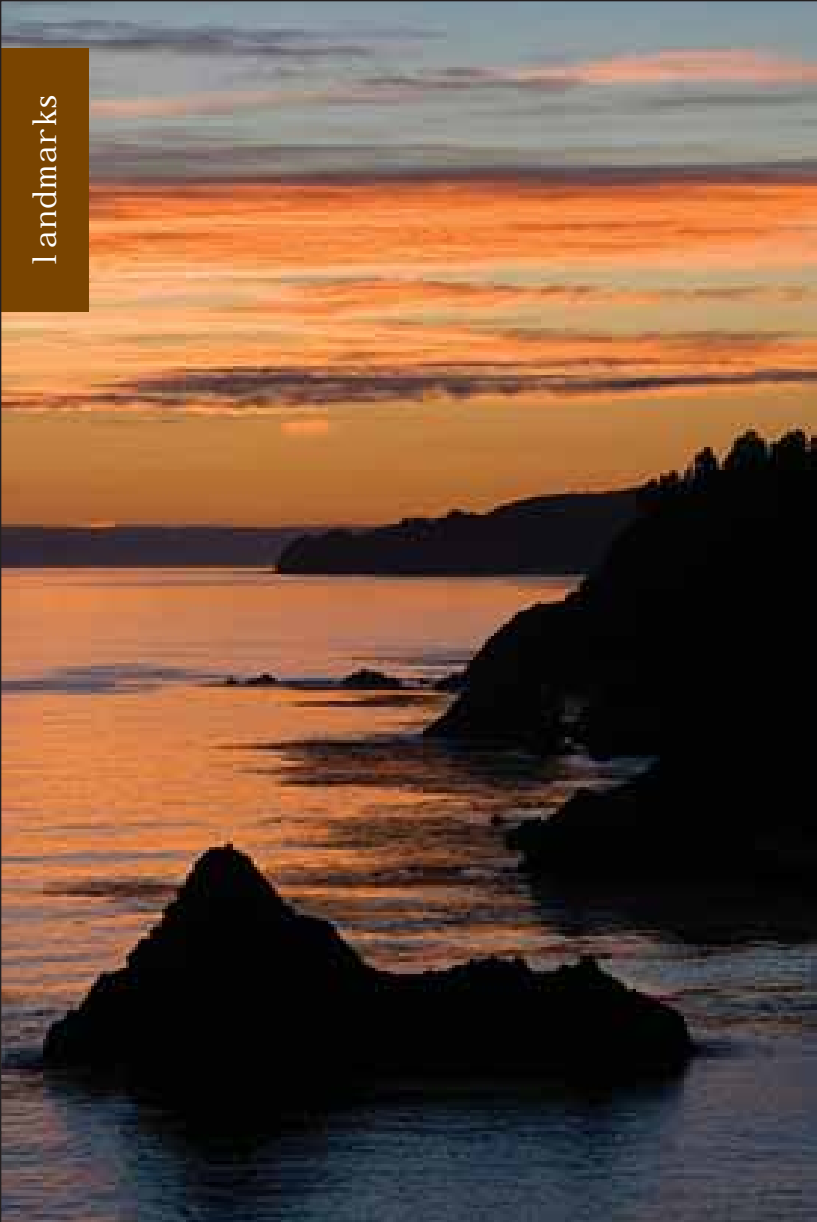
Pfeiffer Beach is one of the finest and most easily accessible beaches in Big Sur. Just one mile away from Ventana, it certainly is the perfect spur-of-the-moment sunset experience. The beach is partly shielded from the ocean by rocks and sea stacks. A cave through one of the largest rocks offers a spectacular way to see the golden reflection of sunset light in contrast with the blue Pacific Ocean. Pfeiffer Beach is part of Los Padres National Forest.

**DIRECTIONS** From Ventana, drive north on Highway One for 1.1 miles. Turn off at Sycamore Canyon Road (west side of the highway) to access the beach.



Pfeiffer Beach





Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park



## 8 Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park

For an easy hike with breathtaking views for a reward, Julia Pfeiffer would highly recommend this park—a place she frequented herself. Julia Pfeiffer Burns is a respected member of the Pfeiffer family. The Pfeiffers were among the first white settlers in Big Sur, when they arrived here in 1869, with one-year-old Julia. This state park combines the dramatic coastal and mountain features that characterize the ultimate Big Sur experience. Occupying 3.75 square miles, the park features rocky points rising thousands of feet above underwater canyons, with streams flowing down steep gorges that are shaded by ancient redwoods. By McWay Creek is a great place to have a picnic. Then hike down the wheelchair-accessible Waterfall Trail to a viewpoint overlooking spectacular McWay Falls.

**HOURS** Sunrise to sunset

**DIRECTIONS** From Ventana, drive south on Highway One for 8.8 miles. The entrance is on the east of the highway.

**INFO** 831.667.2315; [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)



Limekiln State Park

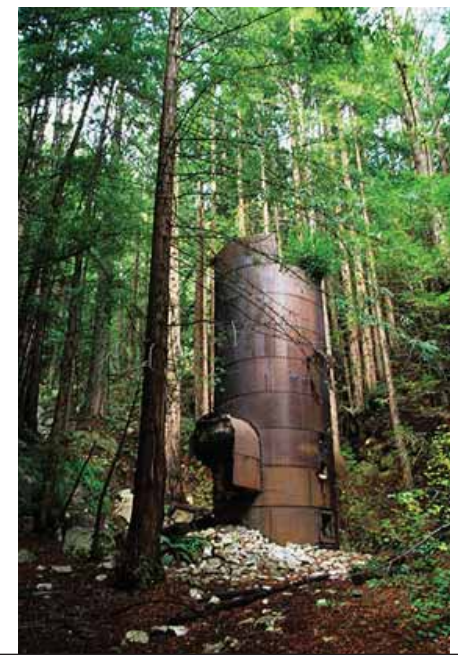
## 9 Limekiln State Park

It is easy to overlook this 716-acre park while driving down Highway One, but Limekiln is a great place to stretch your legs on your drive down to Hearst Castle. In addition to the historic limekilns that lend the park its name, this park has another unique feature: it offers one of the few easily accessible entries to a rocky Big Sur beach. There is also a great waterfall not to far from the highway.

**HOURS** Daily, 9 a.m. – 7 p.m.; Memorial Day through Labor Day, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

**DIRECTIONS** From Ventana, drive south on Highway One for 24 miles. The entrance is located on the east side of the highway.

**INFO** 831.667.2403; [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)





Jade Cove



## 10 Sand Dollar Beach & Jade Cove

Sand Dollar Beach is the longest easily accessible beach along the Big Sur Coast, and considered one of the most beautiful and scenic. Surfing, exploring and fishing are within walking distance of Plaskett Creek campground. The beach is also a designated hang-glider site and features a picnic area and bathrooms. Follow the nearby path on Highway One to Jade Cove, where there are wonderful opportunities for rock-hounding and where you can dive in search of the “stone of heaven,” as the Chinese call it, which ranges in color from light turquoise to deep emerald green.

**DIRECTIONS** From Ventana, drive south on Highway One for 31.1 miles. The beach entrance is on the west side of the highway.

## 11 Hearst Castle & Hearst Memorial State Beach

Built by media tycoon William Randolph Hearst and architect Julia Morgan, Hearst Castle looks nothing like a castle. La Casa Grande, as Hearst called it, boasts 115 lavish rooms, but after 30 years of construction starting in 1919, it still remains unfinished. Hearst Castle is open for tours daily except Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s Day. Four daytime tours and one evening tour are available. The first tour starts at 8:20 a.m. and the last daytime tour starts at 3:20 p.m. The evening tour starting time varies according to the sunset hour. Contact the front desk for more information regarding booking the tour. Directly across from Hearst Castle on the west side of Highway One is the entrance to Hearst Memorial State Beach, a sandy cove once used as the ocean-front playground for Hearst, his family and friends.

**HOURS** Tour hours vary. Reservations are required to guarantee the tour, date and time desired.

**DIRECTIONS** From Ventana, drive south on Highway One for 70 miles. Hearst Castle sits on a hill on the east side of the highway, and the beach entrance is on the west side of the highway.

**INFO** 800.444.4445; [www.hearstcastle.org](http://www.hearstcastle.org)

The Neptune Pool at Hearst Castle

