

# Mount Diablo State Park



## Our Mission

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.



California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at **(925) 837-2525**. If you need this publication in an alternate format, contact [interp@parks.ca.gov](mailto:interp@parks.ca.gov).

### CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

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### Mount Diablo State Park

96 Mitchell Canyon Road

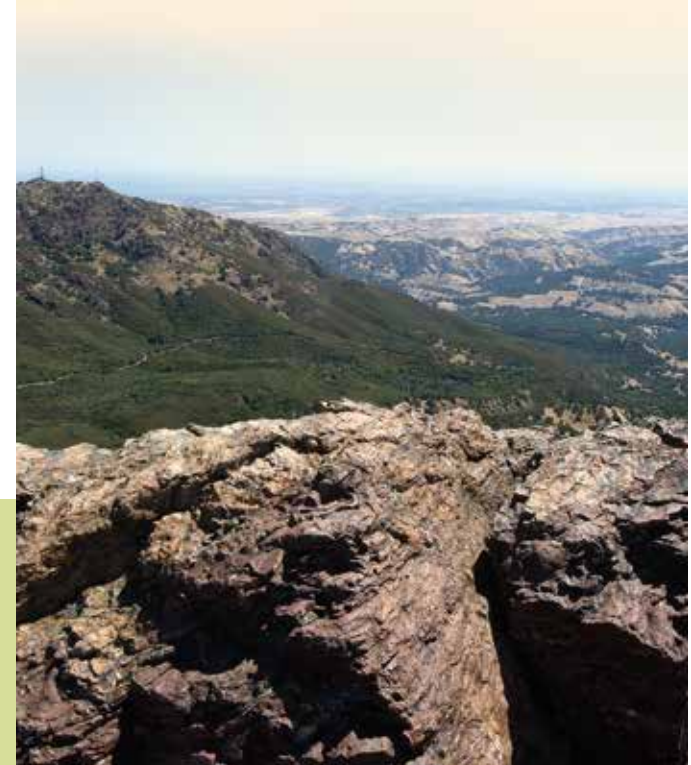
Clayton, CA 94517

(925) 837-2525

[www.parks.ca.gov/mountdiablo](http://www.parks.ca.gov/mountdiablo)

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*Each twist and turn  
leading up to Mount  
Diablo's summit carries  
visitors high above the  
crowded suburbs and  
low-lying hills to the  
tranquil vistas atop this  
prominent peak.*



**O**n a clear day, visitors can see for hundreds of miles from the peak of Mount Diablo.

Located in the San Francisco Bay Area to the east of Walnut Creek, the summit is renowned for its panoramic views—west to the Farallon Islands beyond Golden Gate Bridge, east to the Sierra Nevada, south to Mount Loma Prieta, and north nearly 200 miles to Lassen Peak in the Cascades.

A mecca for hikers, equestrians, cyclists, and campers, Mount Diablo State Park draws more than 350,000 visitors each year to explore the park and take in the spectacular view.

Elevations in the 20,000-plus-acre park vary from 335 to 3,849 feet—creating broad variations in temperature, rainfall, and wind exposure. The climate is mild in winter; summers can be hot, dry, and hazy.

### PARK HISTORY

Mount Diablo is a sacred place for Native Californians. The Julpun tribe who occupied the Delta area recognized the mountain as the birthplace of the world. The Northern Miwok of the Sierra foothills saw it as a supernatural being that brought light to a dark world, and the Central Miwok of the foothills featured the mountain in their most important renewal ceremonies.

Mount Diablo was home to many tribes: The Volvon held the peak and areas to the east, the Chupcan occupied the north, and the Tatcan, the west. The Souyen lived on the southern end of the mountain.

*Monte del Diablo* (Thicket of the Devil) was the name given to a willow thicket at nearby Pacheco Slough (modern Concord), where,

in 1804, the Chupcan made a daring nighttime escape from a Spanish military expedition.

Later, newcomers mistook the word *monte* for *montaña* (mountain) and gave the name Diablo to the mountain.

Colonel Leander Ransom established Mount Diablo as the initial reference point for land surveys in 1851 and began dividing up public lands. From this starting point, lines extending north, south, east, and west formed a survey grid that covers most of Northern California and all of Nevada—the basis of today's land survey system.

A parcel of land atop the mountain was designated a state park in 1921, and much of the rest of the mountain was declared a game refuge. Due to its spiritual significance to Native Americans and its selection as the initial point for land surveys, Mount Diablo became a California Registered Historical Landmark in 1976.

### NATURAL HISTORY

Mount Diablo is made of igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic rock ranging from 190 million to 10 million years old B.C. Some of the rocks are composed of marine sediments containing the fossilized remains of ancient sea creatures. The summit is volcanic rock, erupted from undersea volcanoes thousands of miles to the west and transported to the area by movement of the earth's tectonic plates. Mount Diablo itself is not a volcano, but



*Clay mariposa lily*



*Mount Diablo globe lily*



*Padre's shooting star*

was formed in the past couple million years by the folding and faulting of the earth's crust.

Oak and riparian woodlands, chaparral, and grasslands comprise the mountain habitats. Trees include coast live oak, bigleaf maple, Coulter pine, and California buckeye. Lilies and other spectacular wildflowers carpet the mountain in spring.

Rattlesnakes sun themselves on rocks while red-tailed hawks fly overhead. Visitors may see gray foxes or coastal black-tailed deer. More than 200 bird species have been spotted, including warblers, western bluebirds, and great horned owls. Bobcats, tarantulas, and a rare snake, the Alameda striped racer, also call the park home.

### BUILDINGS AND SITES

#### Eye of Diablo Beacon

In the early days of commercial aviation, Standard Oil installed an aerial navigation



*Interior of CCC-built Summit Visitor Center*



*Children on the observation deck*

beacon on the Mount Diablo summit. Originally lit (remotely) by Charles Lindbergh in 1928, the beacon, known as the Eye of Diablo, guided pilots traveling to the Bay Area. Visible for 100 miles, the beacon was turned off December 8, 1941, the day after the Pearl Harbor bombing for fear it might lead to an attack on California.

On December 7, 1964, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander-in-Chief of Pacific forces during World War II, turned the beacon back on to commemorate Pearl Harbor survivors. The signal is now only lighted once a year on December 7, Pearl Harbor Day.

### **The Summit Building**

In the late 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built the castle-like Summit Building out of sandstone blocks quarried in the park. Along the circular stairway to the observation deck, ancient marine fossils lie embedded in the walls. Telescopes mounted on the observation deck help sightseers enjoy the unparalleled view.

The striking stone structure houses a visitor center and museum, including a diorama of the park's ecosystems and a topographic model of the mountain.

### **Rock City**

Rock City, part of an uplifted rock formation that extends along the southern side of the mountain, is a popular family attraction. These sedimentary sandstone rocks—millions of years old and carved by water, wind, and time—have created small caves and tunnels to explore.

Sentinel Rock offers great views; CCC-chiseled steps and safety railings make it an easy climb. The “Trail Through Time” path can be accessed from Rock City and showcases successive geological eras.

### **RECREATION**

The park offers an extensive system of hiking, horse, and bicycling trails. Nature walks are scheduled on a calendar at [www.mdia.org](http://www.mdia.org).

More than 50 picnic sites have picnic tables and barbecue stoves. Three group picnic areas serve from 20 to 50 people each. Over 50 individual campsites have nearby showers and flush toilets. Five group campsites have pit toilets and running water. To make reservations, visit [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov) or call (800) 444-7275.



*Rock City visitors*

### **ACCESSIBLE FEATURES**

The visitor center has an accessible restroom and an elevator to the observation deck. Accessible parking and ground-level entry are provided. The Mary Bowerman Trail near the summit is paved for 0.22 miles to the Ransom Point overlook. Juniper Campground and Summit Picnic Area have accessible sites and nearby restrooms.

Accessibility is continually improving. For updates, visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

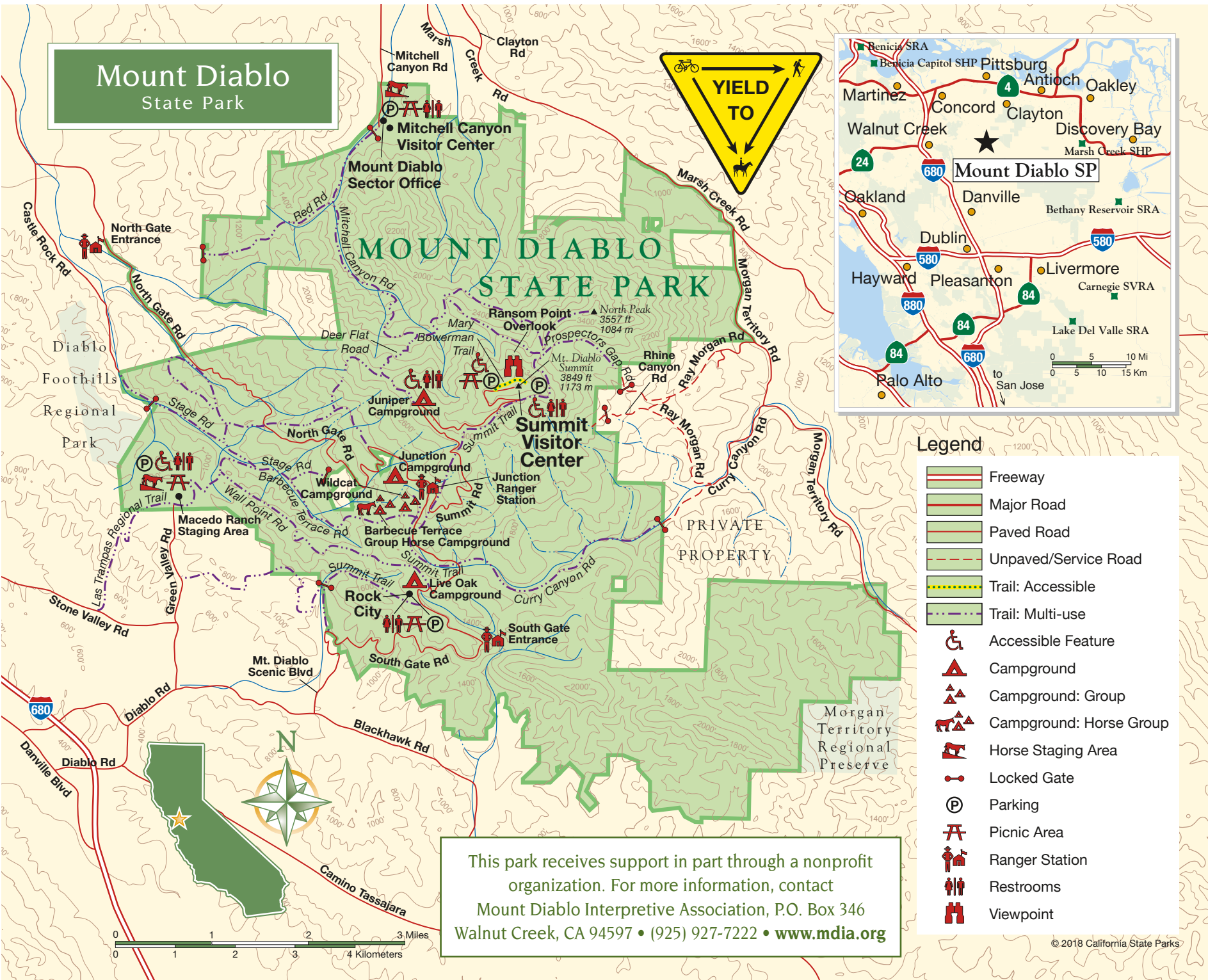
### **NEARBY STATE PARKS**

- Benicia Capitol State Historic Park  
115 West G St., Benicia 94510  
(707) 745-3385
- Benicia State Recreation Area  
1 State Park Road, Benicia 94510  
(707) 648-1911

### **PLEASE REMEMBER**

- Fires are a continual threat. Smoking is prohibited during times of high fire danger (usually from early June through the first significant rainfall).
- The park has steep, narrow roadways with blind curves. Cyclists and vehicles must observe posted speed limits. Share the road; pass only when safe.
- Except for service animals, dogs are not permitted on trails or fire roads. Animals must be kept on a six-foot leash and enclosed in a vehicle or tent at night.
- All natural and cultural features in the park are protected by law and may not be disturbed or removed.

# Mount Diablo State Park



## Legend

- Freeway
- Major Road
- Paved Road
- Unpaved/Service Road
- Trail: Accessible
- Trail: Multi-use
- Accessible Feature
- Campground
- Campground: Group
- Campground: Horse Group
- Horse Staging Area
- Locked Gate
- Parking
- Picnic Area
- Ranger Station
- Restrooms
- Viewpoint

This park receives support in part through a nonprofit organization. For more information, contact Mount Diablo Interpretive Association, P.O. Box 346 Walnut Creek, CA 94597 • (925) 927-7222 • [www.mdia.org](http://www.mdia.org)