

# Lake Perris

## State Recreation Area



### 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 **(951) 940-5600**. 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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#### **Lake Perris State Recreation Area**

**17801 Lake Perris Drive**

**Perris, CA 92571**

**(951) 940-5600**

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

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*Jewel-like Lake Perris  
beckons visitors with  
cool blue waters, pristine  
beaches, world-class bass  
fishing, wildlife watching,  
and miles of riding  
and hiking trails.*



## **H**idden among rock-studded hills,

Lake Perris State Recreation Area's 8,800 acres of broad valley are bounded on three sides by low ridges. The Bernasconi Hills and the Russell, Apuma,

and Armada Mountains obscure the view of nearby cities. Inland, the San Bernardino, San Jacinto, and Santa Rosa Mountains, snow-capped in winter months, stand tall in the distance. The area boasts a rich variety of terrains, habitats, and wildlife.

Lake Perris is located about 65 miles south of Los Angeles and 11 miles southeast of Riverside. The lake's clean white beaches, enticing blue waters, and rocky Alessandro Island bring nearly one million visitors from surrounding communities each year.

Activities in this popular park include fishing, water sports, bird watching, hiking, rock climbing, camping, horseback riding, and visiting the Ya'i Heki' (pronounced *yahee ehkey*) Regional Indian Museum.

### **PARK HISTORY**

#### **Native People**

For thousands of years, the native California groups who lived here enjoyed the area's abundant resources and mild climate. Food, water, shelter, and clothing were plentiful. The native people hunted antelope, bighorn sheep, deer, rabbits, birds, and a variety of small mammals. Native seasonal houses



*Rare snowfall on Bernasconi Hills*

were made of leaves and branches laid over tree limbs set upright, surrounded with low rock walls or other small structures.

Although distinct social units, the two largest groups—the Cahuilla and Luiseño—shared similar

subsistence and settlement adaptations. The Luiseño ranged west to the coast while the Cahuilla extended east into the San Jacinto Mountains and Colorado Desert. Their territories overlapped in inland areas, including Perris Valley.

Artifacts found prior to dam construction indicate that both the Luiseño and Cahuilla traded with such nearby groups as the Serrano, Tongva (Gabrielino), Cupeño, and Chemehuevi. These cultures are known for their rock art; some is still visible around the lake. Time has weathered away rock pictographs (paintings) and petroglyphs (engravings).

Native people's lives changed drastically with the arrival of Europeans. The native people had no immunity to new diseases; many lost their lives, especially those who had been resettled into crowded mission conditions. Today, community outreach and education help native descendants maintain their cultures through song, dance, crafts, ceremony, and languages.

### **NATURAL HISTORY**

Summers are hot and dry. The hottest months are from June through September, with an average high of 94 degrees in August. From December through April, rainfall averages about 10 inches; the average high temperature is 71 degrees, with a low of 46 degrees at night.

#### **Vegetation**

A colorful palette of native plants surrounds the lake. The scrub vegetation on the south faces of the Russell Mountains and the Bernasconi Hills typically consists of brittlebush, sagebrush, black and white sages, buckwheat, and cactus species. The



shadier northern or northwestern slopes are ideal for chamise and penstemon, interior live oak, and sugar bush.

Between November and April, these slopes are covered with colorful wildflowers, including goldfields, California poppies, phacelia, and common fiddleneck. The valley grassland areas, visible in a few isolated locations, are only a remnant of once-abundant perennial grasses. Poison oak also grows in various locations—learn to recognize and avoid it.

### Wildlife

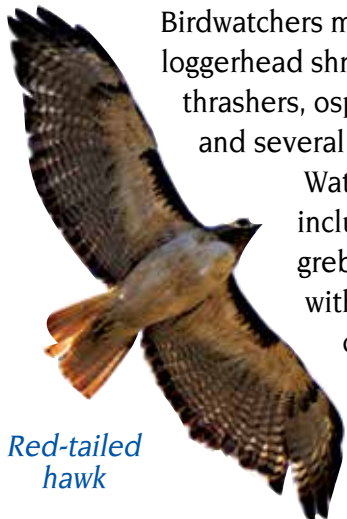
Riversidian sage scrub and chaparral provide habitat for mule deer, bobcats, coyotes, raccoons, California quail, gopher snakes, and rattlesnakes. Though generally shy, these animals can sometimes be spotted during daylight hours. Please do not feed any wild animals that you encounter.

Lake Perris is home to more than a hundred species of birds, many migratory. Some birds are here for short stopovers during their migrations, while others are permanent residents.

Birdwatchers may see roadrunners, loggerhead shrikes, larks, California thrashers, ospreys, bald eagles, and several hawk and wren types.

Waterfowl visitors include duck, goose, and grebe species, along with American pelicans, cormorants, and coots.

The water's edge attracts shorebirds such as avocets,



Red-tailed hawk



willets, kingfishers, killdeer, black-necked stilts, egrets, and herons.

The best time to observe these birds is in early morning and at dusk. Visit the park's website or check with staff about guided birding hikes or scheduled bird counts.

### THE WATER PROJECT

In 1973 the newly opened Lake Perris State Recreation Area became the southernmost reservoir in the 701-mile California State Water Project. When 80 percent full, the lake's elevation is 1,560 feet above sea level, covering 1,800 surface acres. Located between the cities of Moreno Valley and Perris, the reservoir's storage capacity has helped nearby desert communities grow.

### RECREATION

For updated hours, lake status, events, and all recreation and reservation information, visit [www.parks.ca.gov/lakeperris](http://www.parks.ca.gov/lakeperris) or call



(951) 940-5600 on weekdays. For boat entry reservations and site-specific camping reservations and information, visit the park website or call (800) 444-7275.

**Fishing**—Lake Perris is known for excellent largemouth bass fishing. The lake also has catfish, crappie, carp, and trophy-sized bluegill and redear sunfish. Rainbow trout are stocked fall through spring. For more information, see the Department of Fish and Wildlife website at [www.wildlife.ca.gov](http://www.wildlife.ca.gov).

All anglers aged 16 and over must carry a valid California fishing license, available from sporting goods stores and the Lake Perris Marina Store at (951) 657-2179. The store rents boats and personal watercraft; it also carries tackle and groceries.

**Camping**—The family campground has tent camping sites without hookups. Electricity and sink water hookups are available in the paved RV sites. Family campsites accommodate up to eight people, with a

maximum of three licensed vehicles. No extra-vehicle parking is available. Restrooms are nearby, and a trailer sanitation station is near the campground entrance.

**Horse Camping**—Seven primitive horse campsites—separate from the family campsites—have corrals, water troughs, and chemical toilets. Each site accommodates up to eight people and two horses.

**Picnicking**—Lake Perris has nearly 300 picnic sites—many shaded—in various day-use areas throughout the park. Tables and grills are available. The most popular sites are located near Moreno Beach and Perris Beach.

**Groups**—For a fee, groups may reserve one of six group camps or three group picnic sites; larger groups may combine more than one group site.

**Swimming**—At high lake level, the two designated swimming areas are at Moreno Beach and Perris Beach. **Use caution and swim at your own risk.** Scuba diving is permitted at the west end of Perris Beach.

Changing rooms, showers, and restrooms are located along Perris Beach.

**Boating**—Lake Perris can accommodate more than 200 vessels on the water. Launch reservations may be made in summer, when capacity may be reached early in the day.

**Alessandro Island**—For day-use only, boaters may enjoy the island's picnic tables, shade ramadas, grills, and restrooms.

**Hiking, Bicycling, and Horseback Riding**—The park's nine-mile equestrian, hiking, and bicycling trail circles the lake. Another hiking trail ascends to the top of Terri Peak.

**Ya'i Hek'i Regional Indian Museum**—The name of the museum is Cahuilla for "Home of the Wind." The museum interprets the history and cultural aspects of the native groups who call this region home. Hours are limited; see the park's website for current hours. Reservations are required for school group tours.

**Rock Climbing**—Big Rock is open year round. It provides climbing opportunities

for beginning and intermediate climbers, with challenges for advanced climbers. Bring plenty of drinking water. **Climb at your own risk**—California State Parks does not install nor maintain the fixtures or equipment at Big Rock.

**Geocaching**—Lake Perris has a number of themed geocaches hidden in the park.

**Lakeview Pavilion**—Lake Perris has a multipurpose banquet/special event room that holds up to 130 guests. The indoor pavilion features a full kitchen and AV system, with an adjoining shaded patio and lawn overlooking the lake. The pavilion venue holds events such as weddings, parties, or meetings.

## ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

Accessible facilities are scattered throughout the park for camping, picnicking, fishing, hiking, biking, horseback mounting, exhibits, programs, and restrooms. Beach wheelchairs may be borrowed from the campground kiosk. Accessibility details are linked to [www.parks.ca.gov/lakeperris](http://www.parks.ca.gov/lakeperris).

Visitors reserving accessible campsites must have Disabled Person or Disabled Veteran vehicle license plates or placards with written proof of eligibility.

## NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Mount San Jacinto State Park  
25905 Highway 243 (or Palm Springs tram)  
Idyllwild 92549 (951) 659-2607
- California Citrus State Historic Park  
9400 Dufferin Avenue  
Riverside 92504 (951) 780-6222

## QUAGGA AND ZEBRA MUSSELS

All vessels coming into the park will be inspected for quagga or zebra mussels, invasive aquatic species that are microscopic in the larval stage. If introduced into a reservoir, they can destroy the food chain and ruin recreational opportunities and infrastructure. To protect our aquatic ecosystem, disinfect and dry your boat after each use.

To pass the free inspection and help prevent the spread of these mussels, please make sure your vessel is clean, the bilge and all engine vessel compartments are drained and dry, and the entire vessel is free of any water. For mussel facts and questions about the inspection process or requirements, visit <http://www.resources.ca.gov/quagga>.



*Quagga mussels at various growth stages*

# Lake Perris State Recreation Area

- Legend**
- Paved Road
  - Unpaved Road
  - Trail: Hiking
  - Trail: Hike & Bicycle
  - Trail: Multi-use
  - Accessible Trail
  - Hunting Area
  - Swimming Area
  - No Wake Zone (5 mph)
  - Accessible Feature
  - Boat Launch
  - Boating
  - Campground
  - Campground: Group
  - Campground: RV
  - Campground: Hike/Bike
  - Campground: Horse
  - Campfire Center
  - Group Picnic Area
  - Horse Staging Area
  - Information
  - Locked Gate
  - Marina
  - Medical Facility
  - Parking
  - Park Office
  - Picnic Area
  - Restrooms
  - RV Sanitation Station
  - Showers
  - Swimming
  - Windsurfing

**WEATHER ADVISORIES**

At selected locations in and near boating areas, storm advisories are displayed by flag hoists or lights. Display points are usually Coast Guard Stations, yacht marinas, or municipal piers. A boater should become familiar with the display stations in the area and the meanings of the signals.

Daytime Signals	SMALL CRAFT Winds up to 38 mph	GALE Winds up to 54 mph	STORM Winds up to 73 mph	HURRICANE Winds 74 mph and up
0-38 mph	ADVISORY ONLY: (Boaters to use caution, warning only) The flag is usually posted between 25-38 mph, depending on conditions.			
38-54 mph	GALE WINDS: Windsurfers and other SAILCRAFT allowed. Jet skis and other vessels with less than six inches of freeboard are not allowed. Rental fishing boats fall under this category.			
54 mph-up	LAKE CLOSURE: No boats, windsurfers, sailboats, or jet skis allowed until lifted. Flag is square with black square in the middle.			

Bikes are NOT PERMITTED on dam.  
Horses are NOT PERMITTED in beach areas.



All natural and cultural features are protected by law and may not be disturbed or removed.

