

Enjoy your park system.

Carpinteria is a magnificent place, one of great environmental diversity and wonder. Nestled between the Los Padres National Forest to the north and the Santa Barbara Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary to the south, it can boast having a Mediterranean climate with a 4,000 foot tall mountain range within five miles of soft sandy beaches. Each day we have at our doorstep a great opportunity to enjoy nature and to share with our children educational outdoor experiences in wild places. Plan now to take advantage of free adventures right here in Carpinteria. Why travel to an exotic location when you can be an ecotourist right here at home.

Invite your children on a field trip to enjoy unparalleled scenic beauty and a wide inventory of special plants and animals in Carpinteria. Grab a camera, binoculars, a hat, and a canteen. Pack a lunch or plan to eat at a downtown bistro as you walk or bike to Carpinteria's wealth of destinations. The Carpinteria Salt Marsh Nature Park at Ash Avenue and the beach offers eight acres of restored wetlands that play a vital role in providing habitat for at least 23 rare or endangered species. Belding's Savannah Sparrows and Light-footed Clapper Rails are two birds to look for when you visit the park. The interpretive signs are placed along the trails so you read all about it. Docent lead tours are scheduled each Saturday at 10 AM. It's a great way to spend the morning. .

Continue your field trip to Carpinteria Creek at the Eighth Street Bridge. From there you can watch for a variety of riparian dwelling birds. Because the creek was not channelized in the 1960's like other area creeks, it offers us an opportunity to restore local steelhead runs that once frequented the area. With the restorative efforts of the community, steelhead will return.

Tar Pits Park, another natural open space may be accessed by walking through the eastern end of the Carpinteria State Beach. This bluff top offers wonderful ocean and island views and has a spectacular beach. The park's name comes from the time when asphalt was once collected in large open pit mines. Tar Pits Park has about one and ½ miles of trail. Chumash natives still consider this property sacred, so tread lightly and take some time to learn about their rich culture. You can learn a lot more about the Chumash and the tar pits by visiting the Carpinteria Valley Historical Museum on Maple Avenue. Their displays are fascinating.

A little farther to the east, the Carpinteria Harbor Seal Sanctuary is a wonder to view. This ocean beach provides the birthing place for dozens of seal pups each spring. At times, hundreds of seals are on the beach at low tide resting and sunning. It's astounding..

By afternoon you can stroll along the Rhodes-Fleming Trail and visit the Lois Seidenberg Coastal Overlook. Perhaps our local pod of dolphin, a passing grey whale or a flock of pelicans can be seen from this vantage. Find the trail head on the ocean side of the Viola Fields, walk westward and explore the Carpinteria Bluffs Preserve's many trails. There is no point on traveling afar when you can be so amazed so near home.