Nowhere Else On Earth

Something draws us to the sea and its islands. Maybe it is the thrill of traveling over water to an unfamiliar land or the yearning for tranquility—to walk on a deserted beach with birds, salty breezes, and the rhythmic wash of waves as our companions. You don’t have to go far to find such a place.

Off the coast of southern California the Channel Islands seem to float on the horizon like ribbons of dark rock. Named for the deep troughs that separate them from the mainland, the eight islands and their encircling waters are home to over 2,000 species of animals and plants—145 are found nowhere else on Earth. Isolation over thousands of years and the mending of warm and cold ocean currents give rise to the rich biodiversity of these islands. Today, five of the islands, their submerged lands, and the waters within one nautical mile of each island are protected as Channel Islands National Park.

Living Here—Less than 300 years ago, during the ice ages, the Channel Islands were barren, windswept sand spits. The first humans to arrive, 13,000 years ago, foraged on the land and sea around areas where they found food. Over time Chumash Indians settled the northern islands and mainland, and Gabrieliño/Tongva on the southern islands. The islands provided essential nesting and feeding grounds for 99 percent of seabirds in southern California. Eleven seabird species nest on the islands, including the only major breeding colony of California brown pelican in the western United States. In 1972, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the California brown pelican as an endangered species. In 1979 they were removed from the endangered species list.

A Safe Haven for Seabirds

Nowhere else in the western United States is there a breeding colony of California brown pelican and other large seabirds. During the ice ages, channels connecting the islands were cut off by sea level rise to the rich biodiversity of these lands. Today, isolation over thousands of years and the mending of warm and cold ocean currents give rise to the rich biodiversity of these islands. Today, five of the islands, their submerged lands, and the waters within one nautical mile of each island are protected as Channel Islands National Park.

Isolation over thousands of years and the mending of warm and cold ocean currents give rise to the rich biodiversity of these islands. Today, five of the islands, their submerged lands, and the waters within one nautical mile of each island are protected as Channel Islands National Park.

Not long ago they faced extinction.

In 1970 only one chick on West Anacapa hatched and survived. By 1975 their numbers had dwindled to 11. The Right to Save These Birds Act of 1972 called for a plan to protect and recover the population. In 1974, 416 eggs were turned in by islanders. In 1979, 573 eggs were taken from the Channel Islands and hand-reared, but only one chick hatched. By 1983, 1,604 nesting birds were counted on the islands. In 2009 they were removed from the endangered species list.

Protection and Restoration

Protection for the islands began in 1930 when Anacapa and Santa Barbara became Channel Islands National Monument. In 1988 Congress designated San Miguel, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz, Anacapa, Santa Barbara, and the submerged lands and waters within one nautical mile of each island as Channel Islands National Park. The waters extending out six nautical miles from each island are a National Marine Sanctuary. Channel Islands National Park monitors and protects threatened and endangered species, restores ecosystems, and preserves the natural and cultural resources for you and for generations to come.

This illustration is a composite of the islands. NPS / MICHAEL HAMPSHIRE
Visiting Channel Islands National Park

Watching the Waves! Whether you go on the islands or on your own boat near them, the waves are always present. A wave can be a wild rush, a slow roll, or just a slight disturbance. The waves are influenced by wind, weather, and ocean currents, and they affect the environment in various ways. Damage from a large wave or a series of waves can be devastating.

For Your Safety: Be sure to check the park websites or newspaper for details about safety and regulations. Remember to watch for marine life and marine mammals, and be aware of their presence.

The visitor center in Ventura has information, a film, and a bookstore. A small gift shop sells souvenirs related to the islands, a native plant garden, and a bookstore. Both visitor centers are open daily, except for Christmas. You can find more information about the natural and cultural features of the islands, a native plant garden, and a bookstore. Be sure to keep your visit safe and enjoyable.

Accessibility: We make sure to provide facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information, call or check our website. The visitor centers, visitors centers, and some trails have special needs, but getting into the islands is not easy, all the details, service animals are welcome in the visitor centers, but on the islands they are allowed only by perm in the park service.

San Miguel Island

14 miles long and 3 miles wide, San Miguel is a true island, not connected to the mainland. Its nearly 28-mile coastline is a mariner’s nightmare. Rough seas and rocky ledges did not deter the Chumash who fished here, nor did they deter the First European explorers, Jean Fréderic Elie de La Pérouse. Captain James Cook, in 1778, however, ran aground on the island and was forever lost at sea.

Island Features:

- Here are pristine beaches, rugged mountains, lonely canyons, sea caves, cliffs, and the Santa Barbara Island live-forever, a rare plant found only on this island.
- The island is home to a variety of animals and plants, including birds, mammals, and marine life.
- Visitors can swim, snorkel, hike, camp, and explore the island.
- The island is accessible for visitors with limited mobility.
- For more information, visit www.nps.gov/chis.

Santa Rosa Island

The second-largest island, with 53,051 acres—15 miles long and 10 miles wide—beckons you with rolling hills, deep canyons, a coastal lagoon, and beaches adorned with sand dunes and surf. The Channel Islands are a marine preserve, with marine mammals and birds. The Channel Islands National Park is one of the world’s largest marine preserves, with 1,050,000 acres of ocean."}

Santa Barbara Island

10 miles long and 4 miles wide, Santa Barbara is home to a variety of animals and plants, including birds, mammals, and marine life. The island is accessible for visitors with limited mobility.

Island Features:

- Here are pristine beaches, rugged mountains, lonely canyons, sea caves, cliffs, and the Santa Barbara Island live-forever, a rare plant found only on this island.
- The island is home to a variety of animals and plants, including birds, mammals, and marine life.
- Visitors can swim, snorkel, hike, camp, and explore the island.
- The island is accessible for visitors with limited mobility.
- For more information, visit www.nps.gov/chis.

Anacapa Island

12 miles off the mainland, the 5-mile-long spine of rock emerges from the ocean, breaks into three islets, and offers itself as home to 200 species of plant and a host of wildlife—with the largest brown pelican rookery in the United States, shorebirds, and the island’s 125 acres.

Island Features:

- Here are pristine beaches, rugged mountains, lonely canyons, sea caves, cliffs, and the Santa Barbara Island live-forever, a rare plant found only on this island.
- The island is home to a variety of animals and plants, including birds, mammals, and marine life.
- Visitors can swim, snorkel, hike, camp, and explore the island.
- The island is accessible for visitors with limited mobility.
- For more information, visit www.nps.gov/chis.

Santa Cruz Island

9,491-acre, eight-mile-long and four-mile-wide island is a coastal oasis, with white sandy beaches and rough seas. The island is home to a variety of animals and plants, including birds, mammals, and marine life. The island is accessible for visitors with limited mobility.

Island Features:

- Here are pristine beaches, rugged mountains, lonely canyons, sea caves, cliffs, and the Santa Barbara Island live-forever, a rare plant found only on this island.
- The island is home to a variety of animals and plants, including birds, mammals, and marine life.
- Visitors can swim, snorkel, hike, camp, and explore the island.
- The island is accessible for visitors with limited mobility.
- For more information, visit www.nps.gov/chis.

Santa Barbara Island National Park

The Channel Islands National Park is a region of islands off the coast of southern California. The islands are connected to the mainland by a system of islands, islandwide trails, and the mainland visitor center. The islands are home to a variety of animals and plants, including birds, mammals, and marine life. The islands are accessible for visitors with limited mobility.

Island Features:

- Here are pristine beaches, rugged mountains, lonely canyons, sea caves, cliffs, and the Santa Barbara Island live-forever, a rare plant found only on this island.
- The island is home to a variety of animals and plants, including birds, mammals, and marine life.
- Visitors can swim, snorkel, hike, camp, and explore the island.
- The island is accessible for visitors with limited mobility.
- For more information, visit www.nps.gov/chis.