

# Point Reyes

NATIONAL SEASHORE • CALIFORNIA



National Parks Centennial 1872-1972

The story of Point Reyes is one of movement—of the sea breaking on the shore, of the flashing wings of birds in flight, and of the comings and goings of different peoples.

Sir Francis Drake, on a voyage of exploration and plunder in 1579, sailed his damaged ship, the *Golden Hind*, into a "faire and goode baye" at 38° north to make repairs. Some historians believe that this was Drakes Bay. Drake claimed the land for Queen Elizabeth and named it Nova Albion for its white cliffs and banks and its resemblance to England. After Drake and his crew repaired the ship, they sailed west and completed their voyage around the world.

Coast Miwok Indians greeted the strange visitors with ceremony. These friendly Indians, who hunted, fished, and gathered nuts, also watched Capt. Sebastian Rodriguez Cermeno and his crew build a small launch on Limantour Spit in 1595. Cermeno's ship, the *San Agustin*, was completing a trading voyage between the Philippines and Mexico. The captain anchored his storm-battered vessel in Drakes Bay before beginning an exploration of the coastline south to Mexico. A sudden storm drove the ship aground and it broke up. Cermeno sailed to Mexico in the small craft that he had just built.

Another explorer, Don Sebastian Vizcaino, gave this place its name on January 6, 1603. He called it La Punta de los Reyes, the Point of the Kings.

By 1776 Point Reyes was under the control of Spain as part of the Spanish province of Upper California. Early in the 19th century, when Mexico gained its independence, the Mexican governors had authority to make land grants. Soon beef cattle ranches were started and thrived on Point Reyes; then dairying became important. About the time California became a State in 1850, land ownership changed. One New England family owned all the land on the peninsula for a brief period. As time passed, independent ranchers purchased the land from the family.

Through the years transpacific radio receiving stations have been established on Point Reyes because of its quiet and isolation.

On September 13, 1962, Congress authorized a 64,000-acre national seashore on Point Reyes. Today, purchase of the land has been nearly completed, but some residents and ranchers have retained rights of use and occupancy. Please respect private property rights.

## **NATURAL HISTORY**

The peninsula's many habitats range from heavy forest to exposed coast. They provide living space for more than 300 species of birds, 72 species of mammals, many other land and marine animals, and for a great variety of plants.

Geologically, Point Reyes is an island separated from the mainland by the San Andreas Fault. This extensive fault trends northwest-southeast for about 600 miles. As pressures increase within the earth, tension will be released periodically by vertical or horizontal movement along zones of weakness such as this fault. As a result, the rocks to the west are completely different in type and age from those they rest against on the mainland in this



The California murre spends its winters at sea, but nests on the rocky shore of Point Reyes in summer.

area. It is reasonable to expect future movement along the fault.

In the past, earthquakes in this fault zone have caused disasters. San Francisco was almost destroyed by the earthquake of 1906. Buildings toppled, communications were disrupted, water and gas mains were broken, and fires burned entire sections of the town. At Point Reyes, land on the west side of the fault moved northward as much as 21 feet.

#### WEATHER AND SEASONS

The ocean strongly influences the weather of Point Reyes. The ocean beaches are frequently foggy and windy enough to make warm clothing welcome. Throughout the summer these beaches experience more days of fog than sunshine, but spring and autumn can be mild and pleasant. The country east of Inverness Ridge, accessible by hiking trails, is free of summer fog, but it has heavy rains in winter and spring.

The best flower season begins in February and lingers until late July, reflecting mild temperatures and moist conditions.

#### WHAT TO DO AND SEE

All beaches accessible by the trail system or by public roads are open to visitors. Public roads within the seashore are Sir Francis Drake Boulevard (access road to Point Reyes and Drakes Beaches), Pierce Point Road (north to Tomales Bay State Park and McClures Beach), and Bear Valley Road (leading to seashore headquarters and the trail system).

*Shore activities.* Picnicking and surf fishing can be enjoyed on all beaches; a California fishing license is required. No tide-pool animals may be collected, except for those permissible under California fishing regulations. Hunting is prohibited.

*Caution! Lifeguards are on duty at Drakes Beach only in summer. Point Reyes Beach and McClures Beach are pounded by a surf which is too dangerous for water activities.*

*Inland activities.* Bear Valley Trailhead is a gateway to more than 100 miles of trails. The 4.4-mile Bear Valley Trail is the most popular route, winding through grassy meadows and forests to the sea. Other trails branch from it and ascend steeply into the high country of the Inverness Ridge and the southern portion of the seashore. Four hike-in

camp—Sky, Coast, Glen, and Wildcat Group, with 12 sites each—are at strategic places on the trail system. Campsites, which may be reserved, are often scheduled up to 8 weeks in advance. To use them you must register at headquarters and obtain a camping permit. No wood fires are permitted; campers should bring charcoal or stoves. Pets are prohibited in the camps; in other areas, pets must be leashed at all times. Bicycles are suitable on the Bear Valley and Coast Trails. Horses are permitted on all trails except the main Bear Valley Trail on weekends and holidays.

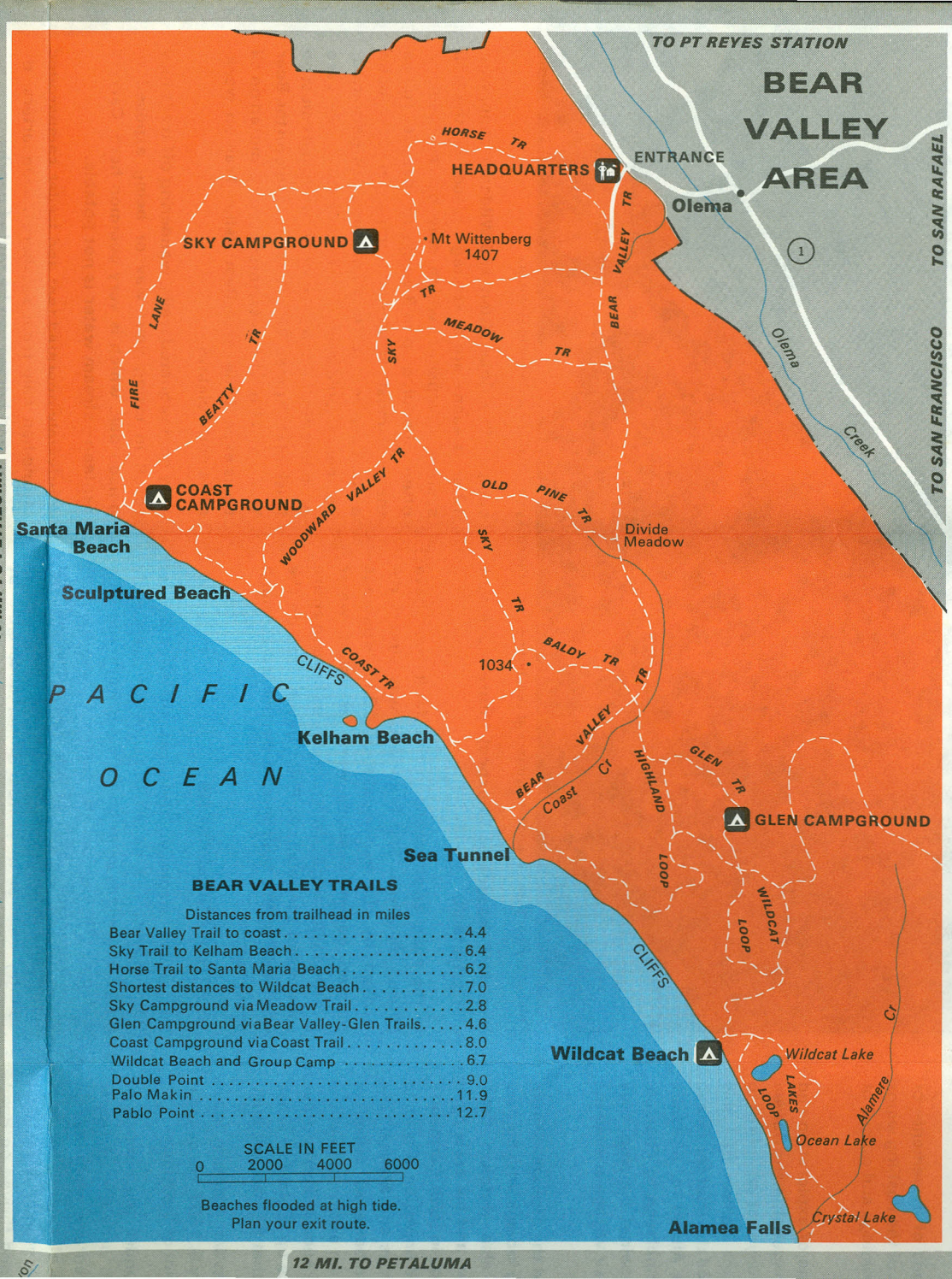
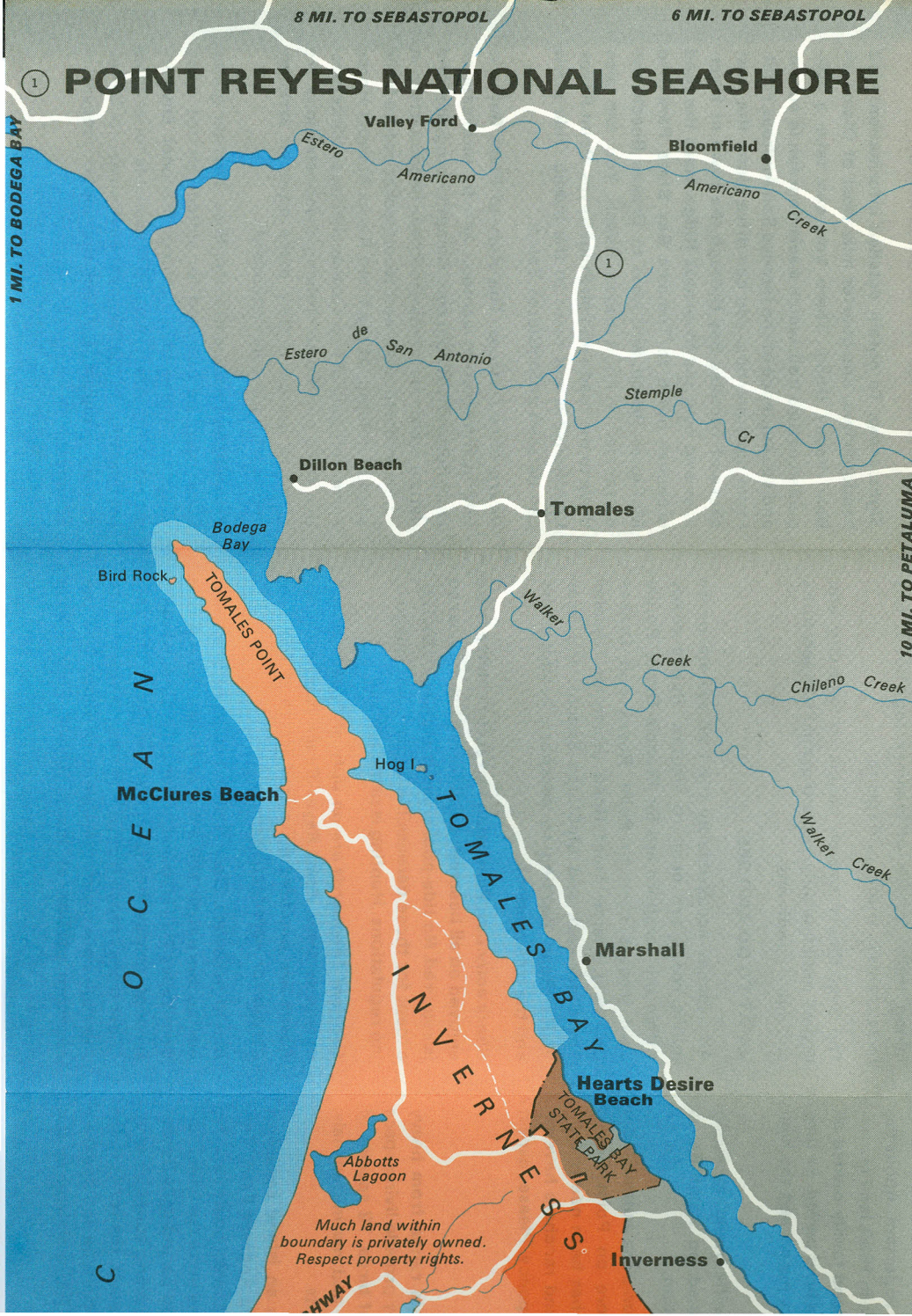
Stay on designated trails; wandering off trails may result in losing your way or being exposed to poison oak, which is very common here. Carry a canteen—stream water is not potable.

A privately operated tent and trailer campground is one-half mile from seashore headquarters. Bicycles and horses can be rented nearby.

*Sightseeing.* To obtain detailed information, visit headquarters, one-quarter mile west of Olema on Bear Valley Road. There you can take a self-guided nature trail, watch a seismograph in action, and see evidence of the famous San Andreas Fault. From headquarters, you can drive along the west shore of Tomales Bay through the town of Inverness and over the Inverness Ridge. Here the road branches north to Tomales Bay State Park and McClures Beach, and west to Drakes Beach and entrances to Point Reyes Beach. You can also drive to the road's end on Point Reyes. Point Reyes Lighthouse is not open to the public. Tide pools can be seen at McClures Beach.

*Interpretive services.* The story of Point Reyes is told at information centers, and by publications and interpretive programs. Campfire programs and nature walks are conducted near headquarters in summer; Earthquake and Woodpecker nature trails are self-guiding. At the Point Reyes Morgan Horse Farm, self-guided tours are available, and interpretive talks and horse training demonstrations are given to groups if they make advance arrangements with the superintendent.

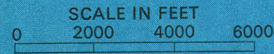
*Environmental education facilities.* Teacher guidebooks may be obtained for school groups using the Bear Valley and Tidepool National Environmental Study Areas. A camp is available for schools participating in the National Environmental Development program. Contact the superintendent in advance.



**BEAR VALLEY TRAILS**

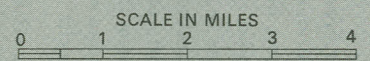
Distances from trailhead in miles

Bear Valley Trail to coast	4.4
Sky Trail to Kelham Beach	6.4
Horse Trail to Santa Maria Beach	6.2
Shortest distances to Wildcat Beach	7.0
Sky Campground via Meadow Trail	2.8
Glen Campground via Bear Valley-Glen Trails	4.6
Coast Campground via Coast Trail	8.0
Wildcat Beach and Group Camp	6.7
Double Point	9.0
Palo Makin	11.9
Pablo Point	12.7



Beaches flooded at high tide.  
Plan your exit route.

12 MI. TO PETALUMA



- Headquarters .....
- Visitor Center .....
- Campground .....
- Lighthouse .....

Distances from Headquarters in miles

Point Reyes Beach North	11.5
Point Reyes Beach South	15.0
Drakes Beach	16.5
Lighthouse	22.0
Tomaes Bay State Park	7.5

4 MI. TO BOLINAS 22 MI. TO SAN FRANCISCO

## **ADMINISTRATION**

Point Reyes National Seashore is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Point Reyes, CA 94956, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

**National Park Service**

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**