

Coastal Commission Raises Standard for Guidebook Mapping

Jonathan Van Coops
March 2007

Cartographers at the California Coastal Commission have raised the bar for guidebook maps with their recent efforts in the Commission's newest publications. *Experience the California Coast*, Volume I, *A Guide to Beaches and Parks in Northern California*, and Volume II, *Beaches and Parks from Monterey to Ventura*, are the first two of a scheduled four volume set of regional coastal guidebooks being published by the University of California Press. Together they contain approximately 100 color maps, all produced in-house by the Commission's Mapping and GIS unit using some of the latest geographic information system, or "GIS" technology, available. In an era when many guidebooks still contain maps produced using graphics-oriented "illustrator" type computer programs, the Commission has used a sophisticated mapping software called "ArcView GIS" to create color topographic maps, regional county maps, and foldout maps of California and its adjacent part of the Pacific Ocean. The result is a visually stunning and highly useful set of maps, providing a clear and professional format for locating more than 650 beaches, parks, campgrounds, nature preserves, and outdoor recreational sites on or near the coast. The detailed maps also locate the California Coastal Trail and the Bicentennial Bike Route.

The Commission's geographers are no strangers to guidebook map publication, having previously prepared hundreds of maps for both the best-selling *California Coastal Access Guide* and *California Coastal Resource Guide*, however, the new series marks a turning point for the state agency in that it is the first time the Commission has used GIS technology for all of the cartography contained in the books. First published in the 1980s, the earlier books contained maps produced with pen and ink and eventually a semi-automated technique combining scanned versions of hand drawn maps and computer-assisted drafting (CAD). This current mapping effort is expected to help the regional guide series to exceed the strong sales of the Commission's previous books, which together have been among the Press's all-time best-selling publications.

The key to the maps is twofold, a result of the publisher's decision to print all of the book's photos and maps in full color, and the cartographic approach,



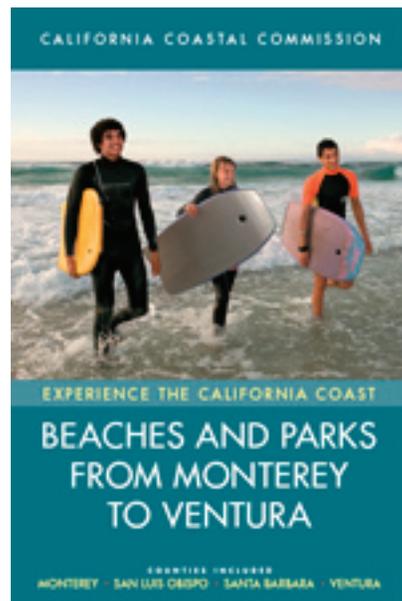
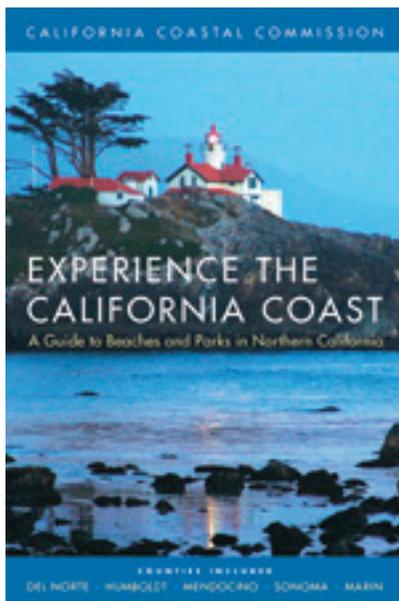
Marin Headlands Detailed Map Example
(map scale approximately 1:85,000)

which makes use of "shaded relief" to represent topography on each map. Whereas in the past, this approach would have required actually drawing or painting in the color shading that represents the terrain and elevation, public domain data now exists that can be processed and used to portray all of the mountains and valleys of the state in color and sharp relief, allowing the map reader to see how rugged or flat the terrain is in any given area. The Commission staff itself is enjoying this cartographic benefit for the first time. Fault lines, river valleys, marine terraces, rocky cliffs, flat and rolling farmland; all of the coastal landforms can be depicted as the backdrop, or base map, with roads and text labels added to identify the features and destinations located along the coast. The electronic format of the maps will allow the maps to serve multiple purposes, including those supporting the Commission's regulatory and planning programs.

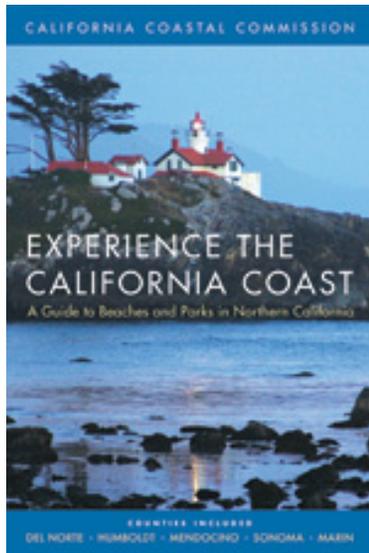
Due out in bookstores November 2005 (Vol. I) and March 2007 (Vol. II), the guides are meant for all coastal visitors, and are intended to introduce the richness and diversity of the northern and central California coast. They include field guide-style descriptions of the natural resources, comprehensive lists of beaches, parks, and paths to the shoreline accessible and available for use by the public, as well as lists of commercial recreational outfitters, and guides including fishing boat services, kayak rentals, and equestrian facilities. The purpose of the regional guide series is to contribute to a better understanding of the importance of coastal resources and a wider appreciation of the coast among Californians and the greater public. Without a doubt, the maps will help further this goal.

More information is available from UC Press at www.ucpress.edu/books/pages/10390.html for Vol. I, and at www.ucpress.edu/books/pages/10749.html for Vol. II, and the California Coastal Commission Mapping and GIS Unit at www.coastal.ca.gov or (415) 904-5200.

Jonathan Van Coops is the Coastal Commission's Mapping/GIS Program Manager, and together with Greg Benoit, Project Cartographer, responsible for the design and production of maps included in the regional guidebook series Experience the California Coast.



Santa Barbara County Map Example
(map scale approximately 1:1,000,000)



California Coastal Commission
Experience the California Coast
A Guide to Beaches and Parks in Northern California
Counties Included: Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, Sonoma, Marin
[Experience the California Coast, 1](#)



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[Read the introduction](#)

"A delightful, richly informed, and user-friendly guide to the Pacific shoreline from the Oregon border to the Golden Gate. Nobody who lives in this area or means to visit it should be without a copy. The compact format makes it easy to stash in a glove compartment or backpack. . . . This volume . . . is a treasure."--RG, *California Coast & Ocean*

"Everyone who loves to explore our coastline will want a copy of 'Experience the California Coast'. . . It's much more than a guide to where to go and what to see. . . . Its attractiveness makes it easy to page through and dip in here and there for camping trips, cliff hikes and beachcombing. . . . More importantly, it's packed with just the kind of information you need to make all the correct turns. . . . On the meatier side are the picture-text identification guides to flora and fauna in each section, along with environmental comments and historical remarks. . . . Concise editing and organization make this guide easy to use. . . . It's so good that if you buy one for a holiday gift, you'll want a second for yourself."--Staff writer, *Sacramento Bee*

"What ultimately sets this book apart from other guides to the California coast are its special features: brief essays and beautiful color photographs on everything from the formation of dunes to the San Andreas Fault. Given that California is a major international tourist destination, this comprehensive, detailed, and informative book should be a primary purchase."--*Library Journal*

"This guide captures the tremendous variety of things to see and do along the dramatic expanse of coastline from Marin County up to the Oregon border. It's presented in a well-written, easy-to-use style, making it a reference that's just as interesting as it is practical. This is a must-have for anyone looking to explore the Northern California coast."--Doug McConnell, Host and Senior editor of KRON 4's Bay Area Backroads

"This book is essential reading for anyone who plans to visit California's northern coast. Whether you're a nature lover or history buff, fascinated by Native American culture or interested in California's complex geology, or if you just can't get enough of the coast, *Experience the California Coast* has information that everyone can learn from and enjoy. And perhaps most importantly, after reading this book, one can't help but have a greater sense of stewardship for this incredible natural resource."--Mark Gold, Executive Director, Heal the Bay

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DESCRIPTION [\(back to top\)](#)

The shoreline between California's Golden Gate and the Oregon border offers an endless variety of coastal attractions: soft white sand and coarse pebble beaches, forests of Sitka spruce and fields of California poppies, redwood glades and crashing surf, lighthouses and whales. This easy-to-use, up-to-date, comprehensive guidebook, packed with information on every page, tells you where to go in coastal northern California, how to get there, what facilities to expect, and what you can do at each location. The guide's gorgeous color photographs, topographical maps, and abundant information on natural history and the environment make it the perfect guide to pack along on any excursion to the coast of northern California for hikers, picnickers, campers, surfers, divers, wheelchair users, birders, boaters, kayakers, anglers, and travelers.

*** Includes a comprehensive list of more than 300 beaches, parks on or near the coast, and paths to the shoreline**

*** Features more than 300 full-color photographs, 49 detailed maps, and charts that provide information on facilities, attractions, coastal environments, access for the disabled, and more**

*** Lists recreational outfitters, including fishing boat services, kayak and surfboard rentals, and riding stables**

*** Gives information on hostels; campgrounds in national, state, and local parks; and private campground facilities**

*** Introduces the coast's major environments, including beaches, rocky shoreline, and the redwood forest, and highlights the plants, animals, and birds that can be seen in each**

CONTENTS [\(back to top\)](#)

Introduction

DEL NORTE COUNTY

Oregon Border to Point St. George

Smith River Area

Crescent City

Crescent City Harbor

Crescent Beach to Lagoon Creek

Klamath River South

HUMBOLDT COUNTY

Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park/Elk Meadow
Redwood Creek to Big Lagoon
Patrick's Point/Trinidad
Little River State Beach to Arcata
North Spit/Humboldt Bay
Eureka
South Spit/Humboldt Bay
Eel River Valley South
Mattole River/King Range
Shelter Cove

MENDOCINO COUNTY

King Range/Sinkyone Wilderness State Park
Westport to Seaside Creek
Ten Mile River/MacKerricher State Park
Fort Bragg
Jug Handle State Reserve/Russian Gulch State Park
Town of Mendocino
Van Damme State Park to Navarro River
Elk to Manchester State Beach
Point Arena to Hearn Gulch
Anchor Bay/Gualala

SONOMA COUNTY

Gualala Point Regional Park to Stewarts Point
Salt Point to Ocean Cove
Stillwater Cove to Russian Gulch
Russian River/Willow Creek
Sonoma Coast State Beach
Bodega Bay

MARIN COUNTY

Tomaes/Dillon Beach
Tomaes Bay/East Shore
Point Reyes Station
Inverness/Tomaes Bay State Park
Tomaes Point/Point Reyes Lighthouse
Limantour Beach/Olema/Bear Valley
Bolinas
Bolinas Lagoon/Stinson Beach
Mount Tamalpais State Park/Muir Beach
Marin Headlands

FEATURES

Caring for the Coast
Redwood Forest
Redwood National and State Parks
Rivers and Streams
Bays and Estuaries
Geology of the Coast
Cliffs and Bluffs
Dunes
Ponds and Lakes
Pygmy Forest
Colors of the Coast
The Ocean
Islands and Offshore Rocks
Coastal Prairie
Rocky Shore and Nearshore Waters
Coastal Erosion
Waves and Tides
Cordell Bank and Gulf of the Farallones
National Marine Sanctuaries
San Andreas Fault
Bishop Pine Forest
Beaches
Protecting Coastal Resources

Afterword
Acknowledgements
Glossary
Coastal Management Agencies
Bibliography
Index

ABOUT THE AUTHOR [\(back to top\)](#)

More than thirty years ago California voters approved an initiative that led to the creation of the **California Coastal Commission**. Later, the California Coastal Act of 1976 established the Commission as a permanent state agency with a mission to protect, maintain, and enhance the quality of the coastal environment. One of the Commission's principal goals is to maintain public access and public recreational opportunities along the coast in a way consistent with environmental preservation. *Experience the California Coast: A Guide to Beaches and Parks in Northern California*, created with these objectives in mind, will prove indispensable to anyone with a desire to explore

the magnificent diversity of California's coast.

RELATED BOOKS [\(back to top\)](#)

[Beaches and Parks from Monterey to Ventura](#), by California Coastal Commission

[Living with the Changing California Coast](#), by Gary Griggs, Kiki Patsch, and Lauret Savoy

[California Coastal Access Guide, Sixth Edition](#), by California Coastal Commission

[The Monterey Bay Shoreline Guide](#), by Jerry Emory

[San Francisco Bay Shoreline Guide](#), by California Coastal Conservancy

[The Natural History of Big Sur](#), by Paul Henson and Donald J. Usner

[\(back to top\)](#)