

# China Camp

## State Park



### 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 (415) 456-0766. This publication is available in alternate formats by contacting:

#### **CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS**

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

**Discover the many states of California.™**

#### **China Camp State Park**

**101 Peacock Gap Trail**

**San Rafael, CA 94901**

**(415) 456-0766**

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

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*San Pablo Bay's  
intertidal salt marshlands  
provide ideal habitat  
for grass shrimp and  
shorebirds near the  
remnants of a former  
Chinese fishing village.*



**M**agnificent panoramic views and miles of multi-use trails greet visitors to China Camp State Park. History buffs, water enthusiasts, hikers, cyclists and equestrians will all find unforgettable experiences at China Camp.

## PARK HISTORY

### Native People

The indigenous Coast Miwok people first settled in what is now Marin County thousands of years ago. Each village had dome-shaped pole homes thatched with grass and tule, with eight to ten people living in each home. Larger settlements also had a sweathouse and a dance house.

The Miwok hunted and fished only for what they consumed. Coast Miwok baskets and clamshell disk beads were traded with other tribes for needed items, such as volcanic obsidian from the Southern Pomo to make sharp tools.

### European Settlement

Explorer Sir Francis Drake called the Miwok “peaceful and loving” when he met them in 1579. The Miwok population declined after Mission San Francisco de Asís was established in nearby San Francisco in 1776; its sister mission, San Rafael



*The Grace Quan*

Arcangel, was built in 1817. The mission system drastically changed the traditional lifestyle of the native people. By 1900, few were left of an estimated 2,000 Miwok just a century earlier. Today some Miwok descendants still live in the area.

The Coast Miwok land at Point San Pedro was eventually taken from them through a Spanish land grant called Rancho San Pedro, Santa Margarita y las Gallinas. The grant was given to Timothy Murphy. After Murphy's death in 1850, that land was divided and sold to the McNear family, the owners until the mid-1900s. A portion of the property that is now the Back Ranch Meadows area at China Camp State Park was used as the McNear family's dairy and grazing land.

### Chinese Fishing Village

After the gold rush and the completion of the transcontinental railroad, demand for Chinese laborers abated. The Chinese had to find other work. The McNears leased some land to a man who sublet it to Chinese shrimp fishermen. Most of these fishermen had come from Canton in the maritime province of Kwantung, China. By the early 1880s, China Camp was one of many coastal fishing villages in the bay area, with nearly 500 residents. San Pablo Bay's mud flats provided an ideal grass-shrimping location. Nearly three million pounds of shrimp were caught each year, then dried and exported to China.

Despite its successes, China Camp's population began to decline after the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which forbade new Chinese laborers to come to the U.S. Perhaps the population loss was influenced by the

eventual outlawing of shrimp export and the type of nets used by the Chinese. A few Chinese were able to continue harvesting shrimp, aided by a new net designed in 1924 by Berkeley restaurateur

Frank Spenger. Villager Quan Hock Quock had come from San Francisco to run a seaside general store here; his sons Henry and George Quan were the last fishermen left at China Camp. Quan Hock Quock's grandson, Frank Quan, still lives at China Camp.

The redwood and fir reproduction Chinese junk *Grace Quan*, named after Frank's mother, was built in 2003 by the San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park and dedicated volunteers, with support from China Camp State Park staff.

## NATURAL HISTORY

More than 100 acres of tidal marsh at China Camp represent transitional wetlands at the edge of San Francisco Bay. Brackish seawater marsh makes up the park's marine habitat.

Surrounding the marsh are several other habitats. Native grassland, mixed evergreen forest, oak woodland and chaparral lead to a



*Frank Quan mending a fish net, 1941*



ridge dotted with coast live oak, California black oak, manzanita, bay and madrone trees.

Spring brings profuse wildflowers. Broad meadows fill with lupine, blue-eyed grass, and Indian paintbrush. California milkwort, buckeye and orange sticky monkeyflower bloom on hillsides in summertime.

Birders may see chickadees, spotted towhees and black phoebes in the park or shorebirds gliding along thermal drafts.

### CLIMATE

China Camp's winter temperatures stay in the 50s while summer temperatures can range from the 70s to over 100 degrees. The park's ridges keep coastal fog at bay, giving the park over 200 sunny days each year.

### RECREATION

Visitors can enjoy kayaking, windsurfing and watching wildlife at China Camp. The 39-acre China Camp Village, the historical center of the park near the beach, has a house museum with exhibits of early Chinese settlement.

**Day Use**—The park has popular hiking, equestrian and cycling trails. Trails and picnic areas fill quickly on nice weekends.

Picnic sites with tables and barbecues are

located at scenic China Camp Point, Bullhead Flat, Weber Point, Buckeye Point, and Miwok Meadows.

To reserve group picnic areas, call the events coordinator at (415) 898-4362 ext.23.

#### **Camping**—Back

Ranch Meadows has 30 developed walk-in campsites for year-round tent camping only. Reservations should be made for April through October at (800) 444-7275 or online at [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov). Visitors must transport all equipment from the parking lot to the campsites—up to 300 yards. Wheeled bins are available.

Self-contained RVs may camp enroute in the parking lot for one night only, between 6 p.m. and 9 a.m., space permitting.

**Fishing**—Striped bass, flounder, perch and sturgeon may be caught at several access spots along the bay. Anglers aged 16 and over must have valid California fishing licenses.

**Programs and Events**—Campfire and Junior Ranger programs are held from June to



*Kayaking near Rat Rock*

September. Heritage Day celebrates Chinese culture with activities, tours, and exhibits. The schedule is available at [www.parks.ca.gov/chinacamp](http://www.parks.ca.gov/chinacamp). School groups should call (415) 456-0766 in advance to arrange visits.

### ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

**Camping**—Six sites are accessible on hard-packed dirt (in dry weather). All park restrooms are accessible.

**Trails**—Part of the multi-use Shoreline Trail and the Turtle Back Nature Trail are accessible, with tactile interpretive panels.

**Picnicking**—Picnic areas may have some barriers; some tables are set on grass.

### PLEASE REMEMBER

- All natural and cultural features of the park are protected by law and may not be disturbed or removed.
- Rules and trail postings are strictly enforced in order to protect this unique natural and historic resource.
- Dogs are allowed only in developed areas; only service animals are allowed on trails. All dogs must be on a six-foot leash.
- Fires are allowed only in park barbecues in designated areas.
- Use official park trails or roads only. Do not make or use unmarked trails.
- All trails close at sunset.

### NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Angel Island State Park  
(415) 435-1915  
[www.parks.ca.gov/angelisland](http://www.parks.ca.gov/angelisland)
- Mount Tamalpais State Park  
(415) 388-2070  
[www.parks.ca.gov/mttamalpais](http://www.parks.ca.gov/mttamalpais)



This park receives support in part from a nonprofit organization. For further information, contact:  
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