

# **Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area**

When the word “largest” or “biggest” come to mind, we often think in terms of “It’s bigger in Texas” or maybe Alaska, but this isn’t always so. The world’s largest urban national park is found here in California. Covering an area over 153,000 acres, Santa Monica National Recreation Area is within a few minutes of downtown Los Angeles, the second largest urban area in the United States. It is so large that within the boundaries of the park, there are more than five telephone area codes and 26 zip or postal codes, including 90210 of television fame.

Established in 1978, through various partnerships, the park helps to protect the remaining natural lands along with many historic sites in the Los Angeles area. Along with neighboring Channel Islands National Park near Ventura, and Cabrillo National Monument in San Diego, this network of parks guard some of the most significant examples of terrestrial Mediterranean-type ecosystems and coastal marine environments anywhere in the world. A variety of wildlife can be found in these areas.

In the Santa Monica Mountains alone, there are 45 species of mammals...from tiny voles and chipmunks to coyotes, bobcats and mountain lions. Birdwatchers can find 380 different species year-round, including hummingbirds, hawks, shorebirds and woodpeckers. Turtles, lizards, fish and amphibians can also be found in the waterways and trails.

There are many hiking and mountain bike trails for your enjoyment. On some of the trails you can escape into nature and yet turn a corner and see the skyline of Los Angeles! You can hike from the mountains, through wooded canyons and down along the Pacific Ocean.

While Los Angeles may be known for its crowded highways and its love affair with the automobile, within Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area there are more than 500

miles of horse trails, including an overnight campground for riders and their horses. Speaking of horses, the park is home to Paramount Ranch, a historic movie ranch where Hollywood westerns were once filmed. Paramount Ranch is still an active movie and television set.

Santa Monica National Recreation Area offers a wide variety of seasonal indoor and outdoor activities. For more information about the park and to prepare for your visit, visit the park’s web site at [www.nps.gov/samo](http://www.nps.gov/samo)

## **Source(s):**

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