

Wilderness.net's Ventana Wilderness Fact Sheet



Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Ventana Wilderness in 1969 and it now has a total of 236,726 acres. All of the wilderness is in California and is managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service.

Description

Legend relates that the unique notch at the summit of Ventana Double Cone (4,853 feet) was once connected by a rock bridge forming a window, or

ventana in Spanish. Established as a Primitive area in 1931 and gaining Wilderness status in 1969, Ventana straddles the Santa Lucia Mountains south of the Monterey Peninsula, an area of ruggedly beautiful coastal mountains. You'll find steep-sided, sharp-crested ridges and craggy peaks falling into V-shaped valleys wondrously hidden from the outside world. Elevations range from 600 feet where the Wild and Scenic Big Sur River leaves the Wilderness to 5,750 feet where the boundary circumvents Junipero Serra Peak in the eastern section (which is separated from the main section by Arroyo Seco Indians Road). Most of the streams fall rapidly through narrow canyons over bedrock or exposed boulders, and waterfalls, deep pools, and thermal springs can be found along the major streams. A great diversity of vegetation is dominated by chaparral, the brushy cover that grows over much of Central and Southern California. Grassy meadows and stands of pine are located throughout the area, and virgin coastal redwood trees stand in the deep canyons of the fast-moving Big Sur and Little Sur Rivers. The largest population of mountain lions in America lives in the Santa Lucia Mountains; wild pigs, wild turkeys, and opossums may be found in abundance. Numerous other mammals and birds share the area, including the California condor. The area offers approximately 197 miles of trails from at least nine trailheads. The Pine Ridge Trail (24 miles) in the middle of the northern section is the most popular. Trails from Little Sur River in the north and Kirk Creek in the south attract many backpackers, and the trail from Kirk Creek up to Vicente Flat offers a challenging five-mile ascent to higher country with extensive views.

Leave No Trace

How to follow the seven standard Leave No Trace principles differs in different parts of the country (desert vs. Rocky Mountains). Click on any of the principles listed below to learn more about how they apply in the Ventana Wilderness.

1. [Plan Ahead and Prepare](#)
2. [Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces](#)
3. [Dispose of Waste Properly](#)
4. [Leave What You Find](#)
5. [Minimize Campfire Impacts](#)

6. [Respect Wildlife](#)
7. [Be Considerate of Other Visitors](#)

For more information on Leave No Trace, [Visit the Leave No Trace, Inc. website.](#)

Area Management

The Ventana Wilderness is part of the 109 million acre National Wilderness Preservation System. This System of lands provides clean air, water, and habitat critical for rare and endangered plants and animals. In wilderness, you can enjoy challenging recreational activities like hiking, backpacking, climbing, kayaking, canoeing, rafting, horse packing, bird watching, stargazing, and extraordinary opportunities for solitude. You play an important role in helping to *"secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness"* as called for by the Congress of the United States through the Wilderness Act of 1964. Please follow the requirements outlined below and use Leave No Trace techniques when visiting the Ventana Wilderness to ensure protection of this unique area.

Bureau of Land Management Information

The Ventana Wilderness lands managed by the BLM are remote parcels surrounded by private land on three sides, with the only access via the Forest Service lands. These parcels are not served by trails, so any Public access would be primitive and cross-country.

The same Wilderness rules and regulations apply to the BLM parcels as the Forest Service managed lands.

If you would like more information on the BLM managed portion of the Ventana Wilderness, Please contact the local BLM Field Office.

Forest Service Information

General Wilderness Prohibitions

Motorized equipment and equipment used for mechanical transport is generally prohibited on all federal lands designated as wilderness. This includes the use of motor vehicles, motorboats, motorized equipment, bicycles, hang gliders, wagons, carts, portage wheels, and the landing of aircraft including helicopters, unless provided for in specific legislation.

In a few areas some exceptions allowing the use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport are described in the special regulations in effect for a specific area. Contact the Forest Service office or visit the websites listed below for more specific information.

These general prohibitions have been implemented for all national forest wildernesses in order to implement the provisions of the Wilderness Act of 1964. The Wilderness Act requires management of human-caused impacts and protection of the area's wilderness character to insure that it is "unimpaired for the future use and enjoyment as wilderness." Use of the equipment listed as prohibited in wilderness is inconsistent with the provision in the Wilderness Act which mandates opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation and that wilderness is a place that is in contrast with

areas where people and their works are dominant.

Wilderness-Specific Regulations

Wilderness managers often need to take action to limit the impacts caused by visitor activities in order to protect the natural conditions of wilderness as required by the Wilderness Act of 1964. Managers typically implement 'indirect' types of actions such as information and education measures before selecting more restrictive measures. When regulations are necessary, they are implemented with the specific intent of balancing the need to preserve the character of the wilderness while providing for the use and enjoyment of wilderness.

The following wilderness regulations are in effect for this area. Not all regulations are in effect for every wilderness. Contact the Forest Service office or visit the websites listed on the 'Links' tab for more specific information about the regulations listed.

ALL VISITORS

- Groups size is limited to no more than 25 people per party.
- Overnight visitors cannot occupy any single location longer than 14 days.
- A California Campfire permit is required. Campfires may be seasonally restricted.
- Do not shortcut switchbacks.
- Pack out all debris, garbage, or other waste.
- As with all designated Wilderness, mechanical vehicles (including wagons, game carts, bicycles, and other vehicles) is prohibited.

Contacts

Monterey Ranger District
406 S MILDRED
KING CITY, CA 93930

Phone: 831-385-5434

Los Padres National Forest
6750 NAVIGATOR WAY
SUITE 150
GOLETA, CA 93117

Phone: 805-968-6640

Links to Other Websites

[Los Padres National Forest Wilderness](#)

Links on Wilderness.net

[National, Regional and Local Wilderness Organizations \(NGOs\)](#)

A listing of societies, organizations, coalitions and other wilderness-related advocacy and stewardship groups.

[Career and Volunteer Opportunities](#)

A listing of sites providing information about wilderness- and environmentally-related career and volunteer opportunities.

Applicable Wilderness Law(s)

Law	Date	Acreage Change (in acres)
Public Law 91-58	August 18, 1969	98,000
(No official title, designates Ventana Wilderness) - Public law 91-58 (8/18/1969) To designate the Ventana Wilderness, Los Padres National Forest, in the State of California		
— download 91-58		
Public Law 95-237	February 24, 1978	61,000
Endangered American Wilderness Act - Public law 95-237 (2/24/1978) To designate certain endangered public lands for preservation as wilderness, and for other purposes		
— download 95-237		
Public Law 98-425	September 28, 1984	2,750
California Wilderness Act of 1984 - Public Law 98-425 (9/28/1984) California Wilderness Act of 1984		
— download 98-425 - Relevant legislation found on page(s): 5.		
Public Law 102-301	June 19, 1992	38,000
Los Padres Condor Range and River Protection Act - Public law 102-301 (6/19/1992) Entitled the "Los Padres Condor Range and River Protection Act"		
— download 102-301		
Public Law 107-370	December 19, 2002	37,110
Big Sur Wilderness and Conservation Act of 2002 - Public law 107-370 (12/19/2002) To designate certain lands in the State of California as components of the National Wilderness Preservation System, and for other purposes		
— download 107-370		