



Mission Trails Regional Park

One Father Junipero Serra Trail
San Diego, California 92119



Dear Educator,

Thank you for your interest in Mission Trails Regional Park and for selecting it as a destination for your class field trip. The following information will assist you in preparing for your visit. We are currently booking in-person field trips for the 2022-2023 academic year.

Reservations

Reservations are required for all group and class visits. Please note that there is a 15-student minimum per grade. Most schools arrive at the MTRP Visitor and Interpretive Center by 9:30am and depart by 1:00pm. Upon arrival, student lunches can be stowed away on carts during the hike, and later retrieved for lunch in the outdoor amphitheater. Mondays are reserved for self-guided field trips only and require a separate field trip request. Tuesdays are available for third grade field trip reservations, and Thursdays all other grades. Wednesdays and Fridays are available for MTRP Foundation-led programs.

After submitting your reservation request at mtrp.org, you will receive an auto-generated email confirmation. If there are any conflicts or questions, you will be contacted for further clarification or to arrange a different date or time. You will receive a final email in the week preceding your field trip to confirm logistics and other details.

Please advise of special needs or accommodations at least two weeks prior to your field trip.

Arrangements for all other grade levels, or other organized groups for a guided walk, may be made by contacting the Ranger Education Coordinator Julie Aeilts directly at (619) 668-2015 or at rangered@mtrp.org.

Self-Guided Programs

At the Visitor and Interpretive Center, Mondays are available for self-guided field trips. The area surrounding the Visitor and Interpretive Center includes a native plant garden with interpretive signs, exhibits of local wildlife species, and hikes along the Visitor Center Loop, Grinding Rocks and Oak Grove Loop trails. Inside the Visitor Center, the first floor of the exhibit hall presents cultural, geological, and historical information, while the second floor features information on the various plants, wildlife, and habitats found throughout the park and San Diego County. In the theater there are four different informative video presentations (see descriptions below) shown upon request. Please note, for a successful self-guided trip, a pre-trip visit to the park and Visitor Center is highly encouraged and recommended. [Park trail maps are available here.](#)

Ranger-Guided Programs

Listed below are descriptions of the Ranger-guided programs offered for grades K-6th. Groups may arrive as early as 9:00am to check out the Visitor Center exhibits or to view a video in the theater before meeting with the Rangers. You are welcome to stay to enjoy lunch and the Visitor Center exhibits after.

K – 2nd Grade: What is a Habitat?

Thursdays, 9:30 to 11 a.m. and/or 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Awareness of where we all live in relation to San Diego's cherished wildlife is the focus of this K-2nd grade outdoor education program. The concepts of habitat and the four elements necessary for one – food, water, shelter and space – are discussed in an introductory presentation. Students are then taken on an easy half-mile guided walk through some of the park's native habitats, to see where some of the park's many inhabitants live, and to discover some of the many signs and clues they leave behind. This 90-minute program begins and ends at the park's Visitor Center.

K-LS1-1, K-ESS3-1, K-ESS3-3, 1-LS1-1, 1-LS3-1, 2-LS2-1, 2-LS2-2, 2-LS4-1

3rd Grade: The Kumeyaay People

Tuesdays, 9:30 to 11 a.m. and/or 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Kumeyaay are the indigenous people who once lived in the area that is now Mission Trails Regional Park. One of the more obvious dwelling sites used by the Kumeyaay includes a granitic bedrock area that has several depressions worn into the surface from hundreds of years of grinding acorns and other foods. This 3rd grade outdoor education program takes students on a one-mile roundtrip interpretive walk to the historic Grinding Rocks site at the edge of the San Diego River. Along the way, Kumeyaay usage of native plants and wildlife resources will be discussed. The cultural and social customs of the Kumeyaay, and their basic way of life, will also be covered. This 90-minute program begins and ends at the Visitor Center, where students will also get the chance to view an educational video about the Kumeyaay, and participate in a Kumeyaay Scavenger Hunt through the museum.

3-LS3-2, 3-LS4-4, 3-5-ETS1-1, 3-5-ETS1-2

4th Grade: Old Mission Dam

Thursdays, 9:30 to 11 a.m. and/or 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Old Mission Dam, a State and National Registered Historic Landmark, is the focal point of this 4th grade outdoor education program. This interpretive tour provides a one-mile loop walk along the San Diego River, to (and on top of) the Old Mission Dam, through the grasslands and back. Topics discussed include the arrival of the Spanish, the Mission period, the need for and development of the dam and flume system, and the cultural changes that took place with the Kumeyaay people at this time. Facilities at the Old Mission Dam location include parking for a bus and/or cars, five picnic tables (with limited shade), two porta-potties and a drinking fountain. Groups who carpool to the park may opt to drive back to the Visitor Center after the tour, so students can eat lunch in the amphitheater on the back terrace and explore the museum exhibits afterwards.

Note: This 90-minute tour begins and ends at the Old Mission Dam parking lot.

4-PS3-1, 3-5-ETS1-1

4th, 5th & 6th Grade: Ecosystems of MTRP

Thursdays, 9:30 to 11 a.m. and/or 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Within the park there are seven distinct ecosystems – places where living and nonliving things interact. This one-mile exploratory walk takes students through four of the park’s dominant ecosystems – coastal sage scrub, chaparral, oak woodland and riparian. Students will have an opportunity to discover and journal the differences between each ecosystem, and learn why these differences exist. Using a pocket field guide, they will also be able to name the prominent plants at each stop. We’ll discuss animal species that may be found within each ecosystem (and, with hope, see some!), and identify soil composition. This 120-minute program begins and ends at the park’s Visitor Center.

4-ESS2-1, 5 ESS2-1, 5-LS1-1, 5-LS2-1, MS-LS2-1, MS-LS-2-4

4th, 5th & 6th Grade: Geology of MTRP

Thursdays, 9:30 to 11 a.m. and/or 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Important geologic principles are introduced to understand the long geologic history of Mission Trails and its radically different landforms over time. The landscape is formed mostly from plutonic rocks, which solidified from magma slowly under the surface, and volcanic rocks, which solidified quickly on the surface. Students will be able to recognize these rocks and know their differences at “look and learn” sites along the way. They’ll see various types of weathering and erosion that shaped our topography. This 120-minute program hikes through the very heart of an ancient 95 myo mountain, which begins and ends at the park’s Visitor Center.

4-ESS1-1, 4-ESS2-1

Field Trip Guidelines

To ensure an enjoyable learning experience for everyone, please remember the following rules and guidelines; also, please be sure to discuss them with your class and adult chaperones **before** you arrive at the park for your scheduled field trip.

Supervision

- Student groups should have at least **one adult chaperone for every eight children**. It is asked that the adult leaders intersperse with the children while hiking, to monitor their activities and behavior. At stops, children are first.
- To avoid distracting students, adult chaperones should refrain from cell phone usage during the program, unless in an emergency.
- Please note the Ranger is a special resource, who can do a much better job for you if not burdened with unruly or unwilling participants. **Teachers and adult chaperones are responsible for class control and discipline at ALL times**; if the group becomes unmanageable, the Ranger reserves the right to end the program at any time.

Proper Attire

Please remind everyone to wear sturdy, **closed-toe shoes** (no sandals) and clothes that are comfortable for hiking. Have students layer their clothing, to allow for a variety of weather conditions. During hotter months, please make sure that your students bring along **water bottles**; a hat and sunscreen are recommended. If you plan to have your

students eat lunch out on the trail (picnic style), please remind them to bring along a bag or backpack to carry their lunch.

Park Rules

- Please stay behind the leader and stay on the trail at all times.
- Please leave all rocks and sticks on the ground; do not remove any natural objects.
- All animals in the park are wildlife; please do not feed or attempt to handle them.
- Please be sure to throw all food scraps and trash in the garbage cans and recyclable items in the blue recycle bins.
- No running, please!

Mission Trails Regional Park

The City of San Diego Park and Recreation Department's Open Space Division manages Mission Trails Regional Park, a more than 7,000-acre natural and developed recreational area. There are approximately 70 miles of trails throughout the park, including the areas of Cowles Mountain and Lake Murray. Seven native habitats are found within the park boundaries, including Chaparral, Coastal Sage Scrub, Oak Woodland, Riparian, Aquatic, Grasslands and Vernal Pools. Old Mission Dam, both a State and National Registered Historic Landmark, is also located in the park.

A beautiful Visitor & Interpretive Center, with informative and interactive exhibits, a theater, library and gift shop, is also on site and not to be missed. The Visitor Center is open seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is free to the public. School groups may bring in their lunches and store them on a cart behind the front desk until lunch time; there is a large outdoor amphitheater on the back terrace of the Visitor Center, or a picnic area located on the west side of the Visitor Center where groups may enjoy their lunch. Informative video presentations about the park are shown in the theater upon request and range in length from 13 to 24 minutes (see descriptions below).

Park Video Presentations

- *"Mission Trails Regional Park - A Natural Beauty"*
A 13-minute inspirational video all about the park.
- *"Link to the Past"*
A 15-minute informative video presentation about Mission Trails Regional Park from past to present.
- *"Trails of the Kumeyaay"*
A 16-minute video about the traditions, cultural practices and lifestyle of the Kumeyaay from the distant past and into the present. Please note, there is an art sketch of a Kumeyaay village shown briefly, which depicts partial nudity.
- *"Stewardship Through the Ages"*
A 24-minute video, narrated by Fox 5 San Diego newsman Loren Nancarrow, about the ownership and usage of the land that is now Mission Trails Park.
- *"Rise and Fall of the Mountains at Mission Trails Regional Park"*
A 19-minute video narrated by local geologist Patt Abbott that takes viewers on the geologic history of MTRP.

Directions

From Interstate 8 – Exit Mission Gorge/Fairmount and turn north onto Mission Gorge Road. At the Friars Road junction, turn right to stay on Mission Gorge Road, and follow it east for 4.2 miles. Just past the Jackson Drive intersection, turn left onto Father Junipero Serra Trail. • For the Visitor Center, turn left into the parking lot entrance, just before you get to the half-closed road. • For the Old Mission Dam, proceed down the open side of Father Junipero Serra Trail. The parking lot entrance is located 1.8 miles down on the left, just past the stop sign.

From Route 52 – Exit Mast Blvd. in Santee. Turn north onto Mast Blvd. and then right at the 1st traffic signal (West Hills Parkway). Take West Hills Parkway to Mission Gorge Road and turn right. • For the Visitor Center, stay left at the merge and take Mission Gorge Road west 2.4 miles. After you pass the light at Golfcrest Drive, turn right onto Father Junipero Serra Trail. The entrance to the parking lot is located on the left, just before you get to the half-closed road. • For the Old Mission Dam, take Mission Gorge Road 0.2 miles and merge right onto Father Junipero Serra Trail. The parking lot entrance is located beyond the campground, 0.7 miles down on the right.

