

# Backbone Trail

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Santa Monica Mountains  
National Recreation Area



## Mountains to the Sea

What ancient creature laid upon the earth, slowly eroding and permitting our feet to walk across its spine? The Santa Monica Mountains once rose upwards of 10,000 feet in elevation, but millions of years of geologic forces have shaped and weathered these ridges, leaving behind beautiful rock outcrops and hidden pockets of wildness. Today the 67-mile Backbone Trail links east to west, inviting all to explore the riches of the mountains.

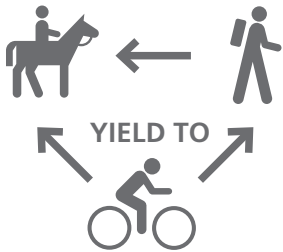
## Decades in the Making



For millennia, trails have crossed the Santa Monica Mountains, but not until the 1970s did people first propose to link the western and eastern ends by footpath. The creation of a national recreation area in 1978 and a shared vision among federal, state, and local partners made this idea a possibility. Years of hard work on and off the trail made it a reality. In 2016, staff and volunteers completed the

last section of the Backbone Trail, creating an unbroken trail experience through the best protected stretch of coastal Mediterranean habitat in the world. This unique environment, combined with easy access from a major metropolitan area, allowed for the official National Recreation Trail designation in 2016. No matter one's interest, there's something for everyone along the Backbone Trail.

## Plan Your Visit



Because the trail crosses multiple land jurisdictions, trail sections may have different names, access, and regulations. Pick your route and plan ahead so you can safely enjoy the trail.

**INFORMATION** and maps are available at the Santa Monica Mountains Interagency Visitor Center in Calabasas. Current conditions and trip-planning resources are also found at: [www.nps.gov/samo](http://www.nps.gov/samo).

Saddle Peak (Malibu Creek State Park) and Chicken Ridge Bridge (Topanga State Park). Contact the appropriate land agency to determine the current conditions.

**BE PREPARED** by bringing water, food, map or some type of navigation device, a headlamp, and first-aid supplies. Water is not available at most trailheads! Be alert for ticks, bees, rattlesnakes, and poison oak. Wear sturdy footwear, e.g. hiking boots or shoes with good tread. Cell phone reception is non-existent on many sections of the trail.

**CAMP SITES** are extremely limited along the Backbone Trail. Since camping outside of designated campgrounds is prohibited, thru-hiking is not possible at this time. Existing camp sites differ widely in their amenities and were not designed to support thru-hiking. A forthcoming trail management plan will propose backcountry camps along the trail that would be managed through a permit system.

**WILDFIRE** is a year-round concern. Smoking and fires of any kind are not permitted on the trail. For current restrictions and fire danger level, visit [www.nps.gov/samo](http://www.nps.gov/samo).

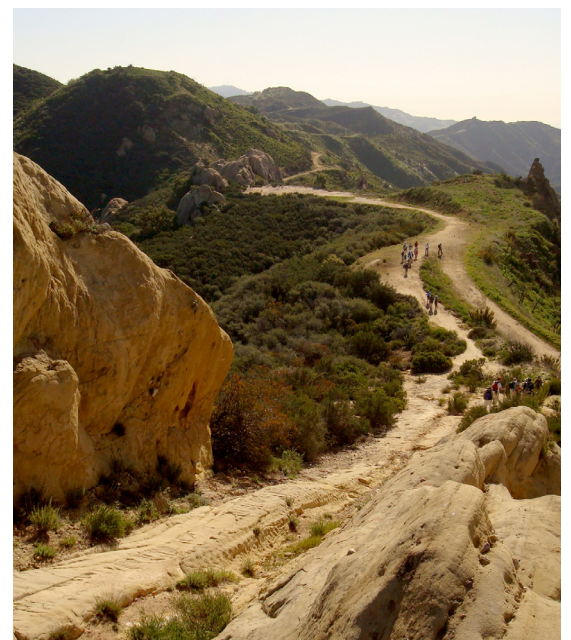
**PETS** are permitted on trails managed by the National Park Service. They must be on leash not to exceed six feet and under control. Dogs are not allowed on most trails managed by California State Parks.

**MOUNTAIN BIKES** are permitted on certain sections of the Backbone Trail. Refer to the map on the other side and follow posted signage. Yield to hikers and equestrian riders.

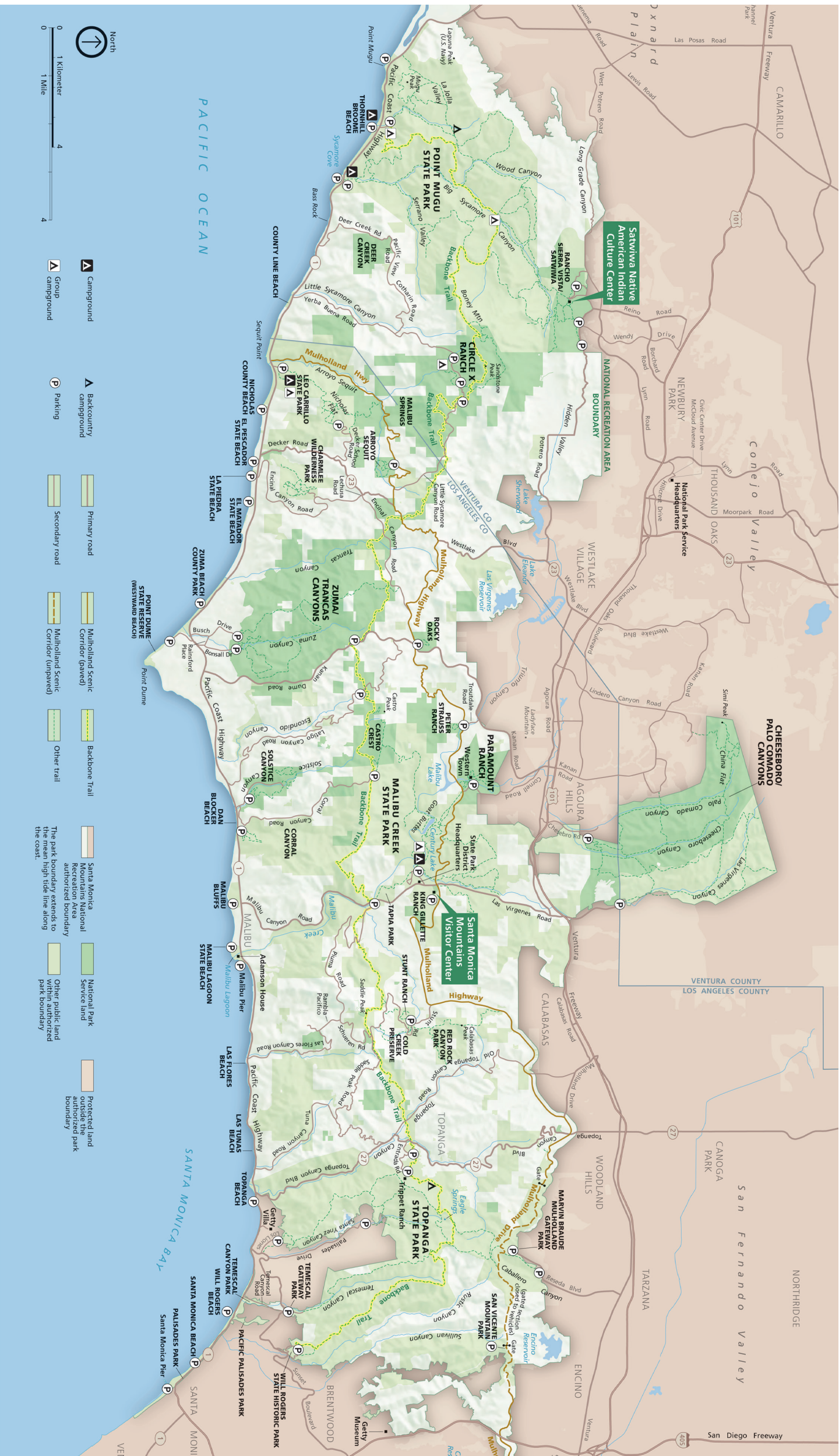
**HORSES** are allowed on the Backbone Trail, though some sections are narrow, especially

FOR MORE INFORMATION  
Santa Monica Mountains  
Interagency Visitor Center  
26876 Mulholland Hwy  
Calabasas CA 91302  
805-370-2301  
[www.nps.gov/samo](http://www.nps.gov/samo)

EMERGENCIES  
Call 911. For a ranger,  
call Santa Monica Dispatch  
at 805-370-2399.







**▲** Campground  
**▲** Group campground

**▲** Backcountry Campground  
**P** Parking

**▬** Primary road  
**▬** Secondary road

**▬** Mulholland Scenic Corridor (paved)  
**▬** Mulholland Scenic Corridor (unpaved)  
**▬** Backbone Trail  
**▬** Other trail

**▬** Santa Monica Mountains National authorized boundary  
**▬** National Park Service land  
**▬** Other public land within authorized park boundary

**▬** Protected land outside of park boundary