



## Mission Trails Regional Park

One Father Junipero Serra Trail  
San Diego, California 92119  
[www.mtrp.org](http://www.mtrp.org)



### 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.

### Mission Trails Regional Park

The City of San Diego Park and Recreation Department's Open Space Division manages Mission Trails Regional Park, a 6,000+ acre (and expanding) natural and developed recreational area. There are approximately 40 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).

### Reservations

On-line reservations for Kindergarten through 6th grade school field trips may be made on our website at: [http://www.mtrp.org/school\\_trips.asp](http://www.mtrp.org/school_trips.asp)

Reservations for all other grade levels, or other organized groups, may be made by contacting the Education Ranger directly at (619) 668-2746, or at: [caxtmann@mtrp.org](mailto:caxtmann@mtrp.org)

### Self-Guided Programs

At the Visitor and Interpretive Center, a self-guided opportunity is available for your school visits. Self-guided programs may be scheduled for Monday through Friday. In the theater there are four different informative video presentations (see descriptions below) which can be started up for your group upon request. 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. A Visitor Center Scavenger Hunt can be printed for the students at: <https://www.mtrp.org/assets/files/VisitorCenterScavengerHunt.pdf> The area surrounding the Visitor and Interpretive Center includes a native plant garden with interpretive signs, exhibits of local wildlife species, and the Visitor Center Loop and Oak Grove Loop trails. Park trail maps are available at: [https://www.mtrp.org/trail\\_map/trail\\_map.asp](https://www.mtrp.org/trail_map/trail_map.asp)

## **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.

Additional information on various topics may be obtained from the Education Ranger 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.

## **Ranger-Guided Programs**

Listed below are descriptions of the Ranger-guided programs offered for grades K-6<sup>th</sup>. Groups may arrive earlier if they wish, to check out the Visitor Center exhibits or to view a video in the theater before meeting with the Ranger, and may stay for enjoying lunch and the Visitor Center exhibits afterwards. Note: Teachers also have the option of students carrying their lunches with them on the guided walk, to eat picnic style out on the trails, and then hiking back to the Visitor Center on their own afterwards.

### **K – 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 relationship to San Diego's cherished wildlife is the focus of this K-2<sup>nd</sup> 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. Children 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.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Grade: The Kumeyaay People**

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

The Kumeyaay Indians 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 granite bedrock area that has several depressions worn into the surface from hundreds of years of grinding acorns and other foods. This 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

#### **4<sup>th</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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.**

#### **5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> 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 compare the differences between each ecosystem, and learn why these differences exist; they will also be able to name examples of plant and animal species found within each ecosystem. This 90-minute program begins and ends at the park's Visitor Center.

#### **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.
- To avoid distracting students, adult chaperones should refrain from cell phone usage during the program, unless 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 also 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!



**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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.