

handicapped parking spots throughout the park, but Portola's trails are not well-suited to wheelchairs. There is no direct public transportation to this park.

Rules:

Portola Redwood trails are open to hikers only. Dogs are permitted on two trails only – Lower Escape Road and Upper Escape Road out of the campground. For day use, park is open from 6 a.m. to sunset.

The Official Story:

[CSP's Portola page](#).
Park office 650-948-9098

Map Choices:

- Use AAA's *San Francisco Bay Region* map to get there.
 - Download the [park map pdf](#) from CSP's website.
 - **★ 60 Hikes within 60 Miles: San Francisco**, by Jane Huber (yup, that's me, the creator of this website) has a simple map and a featured hike. [Order this book from Amazon.com](#).
 - Dave Baselt's *Pescadero Creek County Park/Portola Redwoods State Park* map is an excellent guide to the trails of both parks ([order from Redwood Hikes](#)).
 - *Afoot and Afield: San Francisco Bay Area*, by David Weintraub ([order this book from Amazon.com](#)) has a great map and descriptions of a Portola hike.
 - *101 Great Hikes of the San Francisco Bay Area*, by Ann Marie Brown ([order this book from Amazon.com](#)) has a simple map and featured hike.
 - The paper map, available at the park, is current and very good. It also shows the trails in Pescadero Creek County Park's eastern quadrant.
 - Sempervirens Fund's *Trail Map of the Santa Cruz Mountains (Map 1)* is excellent.
 - Tom Taber's *The Santa Cruz Mountains Trail Book* has a simple map and trail descriptions ([order this book from Amazon.com](#)).
 - *Virtualparks* has a useful map. If you run an Apple or Windows operating system, you can view some Quicktime photos as well.
 - *Peninsula Trails*, by Jean Rusmore, has a simple map, trail descriptions, and suggested hikes ([order this book from Amazon.com](#)).
- PDF** [Portola in a nutshell](#) -- a printable, text-only guide to the featured hike.

- ★ [View photos from the featured hike](#) (June 2002, including Tiptoe Falls).
- [View photos from the featured hike](#) (August 2000, excluding Tiptoe Falls)

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begins opposite the madrone parking area.) On the other side of the creek the trail passes some azalea shrubs, then veers left and climbs some steps. Two signs point you to the left (you can also continue straight and loop back around to the next junction). At about 0.2 mile, at a signed junction under some tanoaks and redwoods, **bear left, following the signs that point to Iverson Trail**.

A short segment of switchbacks raises the trail a few feet, but then the grade levels out. Redwoods block much of the sun, but they do nothing to discourage mosquitoes from their copious feeding frenzies in the summer. This is one of the few parks in the bay area for which I recommend using bug repellent. At about 0.3 mile, at another signed junction, you'll reach a T junction. **Turn right onto Iverson Trail**.

Hiking-only Iverson Trail climbs then descends, all the while under the shade of tanoak and redwood. For a few steps the path winds at a nearly-flat pace along the forest floor. This is a beautiful, quiet part of the park where you might see redwood sorrel, trillium, milkmaids, irises, and starflower blooming during various times in spring. The path abruptly descends to the banks of Pescadero Creek. **Walk to the right and look for the footbridge to cross the creek**. Alders cast shadows over the clear water, while hazelnut shrubs grow in the understory. If you are visiting in winter or early spring, you may see steelhead in the creek. On the opposite side of the creek, Iverson Trail climbs away from the water on some stairs, and reenters the redwood forest. A large fallen redwood has been notched to allow passage. The trail ascends easily, then reaches a signed junction at about 0.7 mile. **Turn left on Pomponio Trail**.

This narrow path is open to hikers only (when it enters Pescadero Creek County Park, it becomes a multi-use trail, but as it is effectively a dead-end trail for equestrians and cyclists, you'll probably only encounter hikers). Pescadero Creek is occasionally audible, but Pomponio Trail follows a discrete distance from the water. Deer are common, and you may see or hear many of the birds that call these parks home, such as bluejays, woodpeckers, and hawks. Huckleberry shrubs choke the trail; look for ripe berries in September or October. A sign marks passage out of the state park and into the county park, and then a few steps later, a signboard hosts a useful map to



towering redwoods. Honeysuckle vines drip from tanoak, canyon live oak, Douglas fir, California bay, and madrone. Toyon, huckleberry, ferns, ceanothus, creambush, and wild rose make up the understory. You might see western heart's ease, forget-me-nots, and fairy lanterns in late May or early June. Pomponio Trail remains nearly level throughout, with a few brief and easy uphill, and then gently drops to a signed junction at about 1.7 miles. **Turn left onto Bridge Trail**.

The broad multi-use fire road sweeps south, descending easily to cross Pescadero Creek on a wide bridge. Bridge Trail turns away from the creek and begins a moderate climb through redwood, bigleaf maple, Douglas fir, and tanoak. At about 2.0 miles, Snag Trail sets out to the right at a signed junction. **Keep going straight on Bridge Trail**.



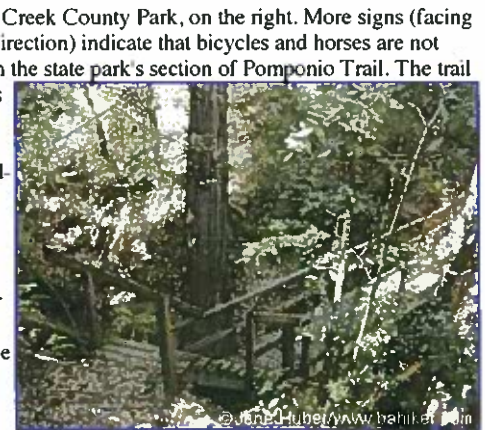
Running slightly downhill along a damp-looking overgrown meadow on the right, Bridge Trail continues through redwood and Douglas fir, ending at a signed junction at about 2.3 miles. **Turn left on Old Haul Road**.

Old Haul Road, open to hikers, equestrians, and cyclists, is a wide dirt fire road. A steep hillside on the right ascends to a ridgeline, at about 2000 feet, but the nearly level trail cuts through Douglas fir, huckleberry, creambush, tanoak, and redwood, on the high south bank of Pescadero Creek. You might see ceanothus in bloom all the way into early June. A few steps after passing over Hooker Creek, which runs downhill and joins Pescadero Creek, you'll reach a signed junction with hiking-only Ridge Trail (this is a possible option to extend this hike, with significant elevation change), which starts here and heads south toward Big Basin. **Continue straight on Old Haul Road**.

The trail passes through a stretch with erosive sandy soil. Some stunted redwoods cling to the side of a roadcut. Other creeks and seasonal streams trickle downhill from the right. The largest, Fall Creek, is responsible for lovely Tiptoe Falls -- you'll likely hear the water spilling downhill on the left. Iverson Creek is crossed just before 2 signed junctions at about 3.6 miles (Portola Trail returns from the ridge on the right). **Turn left down the service road, reentering Portola State Park**.



Pescadero Creek County Park, on the right. More signs (facing the other direction) indicate that bicycles and horses are not allowed on the state park's section of Pomponio Trail. The trail then opens up a bit, widening to fire road-width. There's plenty of room to crane your neck up towards the



The dirt road (closed to horses), starts a somewhat steep drop to the north. Before the descent gets bothersome, to the left Iverson Trail begins at a signed junction at about 3.7 miles. In August of 2000 this entrance was signed as closed, due to downed trees .5 mile in. When I returned in June 2002, the trail was not blocked off, but there was a major obstacle at that slide spot, and the trail was signed as closed coming the other direction at that area. (Ask at the ranger station for the current status of the trail. If this part of Iverson Trail is closed you can reach Tiptoe Falls from the trail's other end. The route as I found it is far below decent standards, but still manageable. Use your best judgment if it seems dodgy to you. If the trail is closed, return to the trailhead via the service road.) **Turn left onto**



Iverson Trail.
The narrow path drops on a short flight of stairs and crosses a creek on a bridge. A familiar assortment of tanoak,



redwood, and huckleberry shade the trail as it winds through the woods at a mostly level pace. At the slide area, several large trees sprawled like giant pick-up-sticks, and I couldn't even tell where the trail used to be. A path lead to the left, and straight ahead a downed redwood stretched across the canyon, but as that tree curved slightly left I was unable to see the end of it. After a bit of poking around, I decided that the log was the only way to go. Its surface was flattened a bit, and some branched had been lopped off, so I obviously wasn't the first to walk the plank across the tree. For the most part the dropoff seemed slight, but there was so much vegetation crowding the area that I couldn't really tell (probably a good thing). The log broadened towards the end, and I hopped off where a little sign (facing the other direction) proclaimed this part of the trail closed (!). Specifics may change if the trail is rerouted, but on my visit the trail ascended a switchback and some steps. You'll continue to climb easily through the forest. A massive hedge of huckleberry towers over 6 feet on the left. At about 4.2 miles you'll reach a signed junction. **Turn left, toward Tiptoe Falls** – just a short distance at a slight incline from the junction. The canyon walls rise steeply up on both sides, and little Tiptoe Falls drops a few feet down from the hillside like water into a washbasin. Five-finger ferns and a young bigleaf maple complete the tableau. Even when I visited in June there was some water flowing, and (weather permitting) I can't think of a nicer place for lunch. When you're ready, **retrace your steps back to the previous junction, then continue straight.**



Iverson Trail crosses Fall Creek one more time, then the trail descends easily. Redwoods are still common, but there's quite a bit of grass, horsetail, and ferns. The trail bisects a sloping meadow, then reaches a signed junction at about 4.4 miles (the spur to the right is an option, but you'll have to cross Pescadero Creek without the benefit of a bridge). **Continue, to the left, on Iverson Trail.**

The trail begins to climb, weaving through redwoods. On the right the hillside slopes sharply down to Pescadero Creek, visible at a few places where Iverson Trail lingers near dropoffs, some of them fenced. Watch your footing on this stretch. The trail crests, then begins to descend at a somewhat steep pace. Abruptly, Iverson levels out, as if the descent had never happened. At about 4.6 miles you'll reach a familiar junction, with the path leading back to Sequoia Nature Trail heading right. **Turn right and retrace your steps back to the**

trailhead.

Total distance: about 4.9 miles
Last hiked: Monday, June 3, 2002

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