Vallecito Regional Park

County of San Diego
Department of
Parks and Recreation

Reservations:

2454 Heritage Park Row
Old Town San Diego, CA 92110

San Diego County (Toll Free) (877) 565-3600
Outside San Diego County (858) 565-3600
Information: (858) 694-3049

www.sdparks.org

Welcome to Vallecito Regional Park

When an East Coast traveler saw Vallecito for the first time in 1859, he described it as a “beautiful green spot — a perfect oasis in the desert.” That it was, and still is. A portion of that “little valley,” as its Spanish name is translated, has been preserved as a county park built around a reconstruction of the historic Vallecito Stage Station. But the park preserves far more than history. It offers the modern-day camper a quiet place in which desert secrets reveal themselves to those who take the time to watch and listen.

San Diego Historical Society

The first Butterfield stage leaves Missouri, 1858

A Green Refuge

That 19th Century traveler was just one of a long line of appreciative visitors. For the Native Americans who lived here for thousands of years, for Spanish conquistadors, for explorers and soldiers such as Kit Carson and General Stephen Kearny, for emigrants in the early part of this century who still traveled by wagon, Vallecito has always been a green refuge in an often harsh land.

Countless generations of Native Americans camped here but left little evidence of their occupation. In contrast, a single generation of 19th Century Americans left indelible impressions. One example, the stage station, is testimony to the most

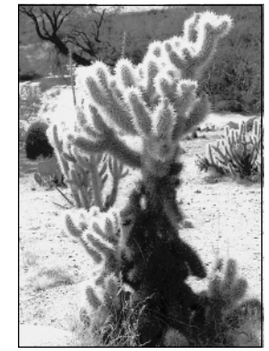
dynamic decade of this area’s history. First used as an army supply depot, then as a rest stop on the "Jackass Mail" between San Antonio and San Diego, the building was busiest during the lifetime of the Butterfield Overland Stage (1858-61). The stage line carried mail and passengers over the 2,800 miles separating Tipton, Missouri and San Francisco in 25 days. It was said to be the longest stage ride in the world.

Stage stations scattered along the route offered the weary passengers a brief meal and rest as the horses were changed. Then it was on to the next stop on the 24-hour-a-day journey. Vallecito was a favorite such station, since it was the first place with greenery that travelers saw after crossing the hostile desert west of Yuma. But the Civil War ended the southern mail route, and Vallecito went into a slow decline.

In 1934 the County purchased the crumbling building and surrounding land, and rebuilt the station using original materials. But it's not only human history that is preserved here. The extensive vegetation in the small valley supports abundant wildlife, including foxes, coyotes, mountain lions, and many reptiles. Birds are especially attracted to the mesquite and acacia thickets; among the avian residents are desert specialties such as cactus wrens and black-throated sparrows.

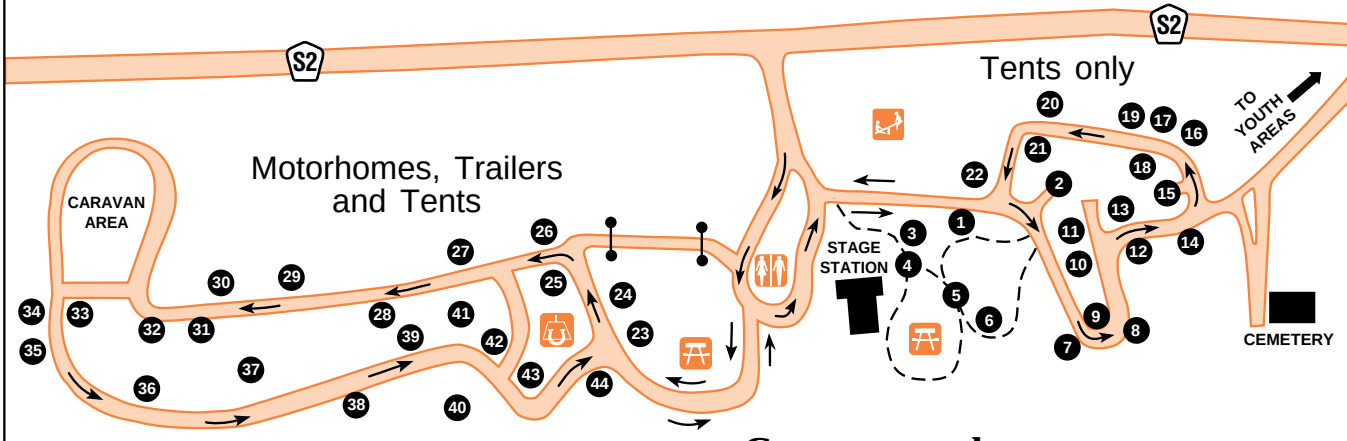
Facilities

Vallecito is a quiet alternative to some of the busier desert campgrounds. One attraction is the weather, which averages about 10 degrees cooler

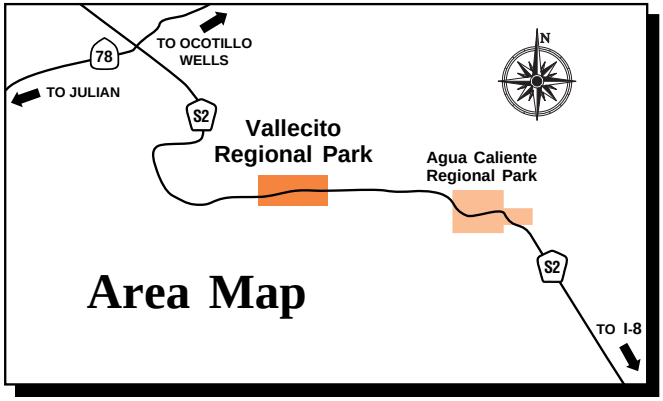


than nearby Agua Caliente. The 44 primitive campsites at Vallecito have tables, fire rings, and barbecue stoves, and water is available at scattered locations throughout the campground. A caravan area and two youth areas offer additional camping possibilities at the 71-acre park. Children will enjoy the tot lot, and picnickers will want to make use of a large covered picnic area. Pets are permitted. Vallecito is a convenient hub from which to enjoy other desert activities, such as the miles of hiking trails in Agua Caliente Regional Park, four miles south on S-2, and in the nearby Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Vallecito is open from Labor Day weekend to Memorial Day weekend.

Vallecito Regional Park



Campground



Area Map

Legend

- Non-reservable sites
- Trail
- Gate
- Restrooms
- Picnic Area
- Horseshoes
- Playground

Maps Prepared by DPW Cartographic Services - Not to Scale (11/99)

PARK REGULATIONS

Fires: Must be confined to existing stoves or fire rings.

Pets: For the protection of wildlife, pets are not permitted.

Waste Water: Please dispose of all waste water in an approved dump station, never on the ground. See ranger for exact locations.

Vegetation and Natural Features: All plants, animals, natural features, and archaeological resources are fully protected and may not be damaged, injured, or removed. Please do not gather firewood from within the park.

Trees: Do not tie or hang ropes, wire, or tents to trees. Do not drive nails, screws, or staples into trees.

Generators: Use of generators is prohibited.

Noise: To insure each park guest's pleasure and peace, quiet hours are from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. Of course, excessive noise or loud music are discouraged at all times.

Firearms and weapons: Firearms, fireworks, and weapons are not permitted in County Parks.

Youth: All persons under 18 years of age must be accompanied by a legally responsible adult with medical authorization for each child while camping in the park.

Alcoholic Beverages: Alcoholic beverages are permitted providing the alcohol content does not exceed 20%.

Fees: Campsite fee pays for one vehicle or "camping unit." A second passenger vehicle is allowed per site, with the payment of an additional fee. No more than two tents per site.

Vehicles: No off-road activity is allowed within the park. All vehicles operating within the park must be street licensed. Contact the ranger concerning rules regulating off-road activity in the surrounding area.

Checkout time: 2:00 p.m.

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