

East Santa Cruz Island



Arriving at Santa Cruz Island, most visitors are impressed by the massive size of this island in the sea. Chumash Indians, the first humans to live on the Channel Islands, called the island Limuw, which actually means “In The Sea”. Santa Cruz Island is the largest of all the Channel Islands, and it is also the most diverse. Two mountain ranges that rise over 2000 feet above sea level, create many canyons, fresh water springs, streams, coastal cliffs, pristine sandy beaches, and rugged rocky intertidal areas. In part, because of the islands diversity, there is an extensive cultural history here, beginning with the Chumash Indians, followed by ranching, and now as part of the Channel Islands National Park.

Chumash Legends

The Chumash did not use written language, so we rely on oral narratives when interpreting their stories or legends. The legend of the Rainbow Bridge, tells of the first Chumash on Limuw (Santa Cruz Island). They were made from the seeds of a magic plant by the Earth Goddess, *Hutash*. The people lived well on Limuw, and more were born each year causing their villages to grow and grow. As the island became crowded with people, *Hutash* decided some of the people should move to the mainland, which at that time did not have many people. Since there were not enough canoes to carry the people, *Hutash* made a very long, very high rainbow bridge. The Chumash started across and some made it safely, but others looked down, becoming dizzy, and falling into the cold ocean below. *Hutash* felt badly and did not want here people to drown, so she turned them into dolphins. The Chumash have since believed, that the dolphins are their brothers.



Chumash, Mati Waiya, telling the story of the Rainbow Bridge on June 8th, World Oceans Day 2003

Ranching on Santa Cruz Island

The Spanish made contact with the Channel Islands in the mid 1500s. This contact brought many changes to the Chumash way of life. New diseases were introduced as were different philosophies. Many Chumash moved to missions on the mainland and were taught a different way of life. Eventually, there were no Chumash on the islands. The ranching era on Santa Cruz Island came next. Scorpion Ranch was one of several ranching establishments on Santa Cruz from the 1800s through the 1900s. It might seem like an isolated island is a poor place for a ranch, but there were some real advantages. During your visit try to discover what some of these might have been?



Island Isolation

The northern Channel Islands rose from the sea about 5 million years ago, and are true oceanic islands, isolated from the mainland. This isolation has resulted in some of the unique assemblages of plants and animals that are found in the Channel Islands National Park. Though isolated, these islands have both a rich natural and cultural history going back hundreds, or even thousands of years ago. Today, visitors to the Channel Islands National Park can observe many of the unique natural wonders, as well as see first hand some of the human impacts which have become part of island life. During the interpretive program on the island, your guide will help you discover how isolation from the mainland has had a profound effect on all island life. In addition you will be introduced to some of the ongoing research, restoration and preservation efforts of the National Park designed to help protect these unique island resources.

The following are some terms that will be used on your guided hike, and examples you might come across as part of your East Santa Cruz Island experience.

Native: a species that grows or occurs naturally in California. Furthermore, natives to the Channel Islands include species that were not brought here by humans.



Left: Datura, also known as Jimson Weed, was used as a ceremonial hallucinogen by Native Americans, it is toxic to humans and has caused many deaths.



Right: California poppies bloom in the spring in grasslands and coastal scrub habitats on the island.

Exotic or non-native: a species that has been introduced by man to the island from the adjacent mainland or another area.



Left: several species of exotic south African iceplants have been introduced to the Channel Islands including the small flowered iceplant.



Right: several species of thistles grow on the island. A European native, the milk thistle is found along the trail leading to Cavern Point.

Island Endemic: a species that grows naturally only on one or more of the Channel Islands.

Below are a few examples of endemic island plants that you might see at Santa Cruz Island

Island Morning Glory



Island Monkey Flower



Santa Cruz Island Buckwheat



Animals of Santa Cruz Island: being the largest and most diverse, Santa Cruz island supports a number of animal species. The island fox is the largest native mammal at 12 to 13 inches in height. The fox is rarely seen, and is now threatened with extinction. The island jay is a Santa Cruz island endemic, it is found nowhere else in the world. There are also five reptile species, and three amphibians, including the pacific tree frog.

Island Fox



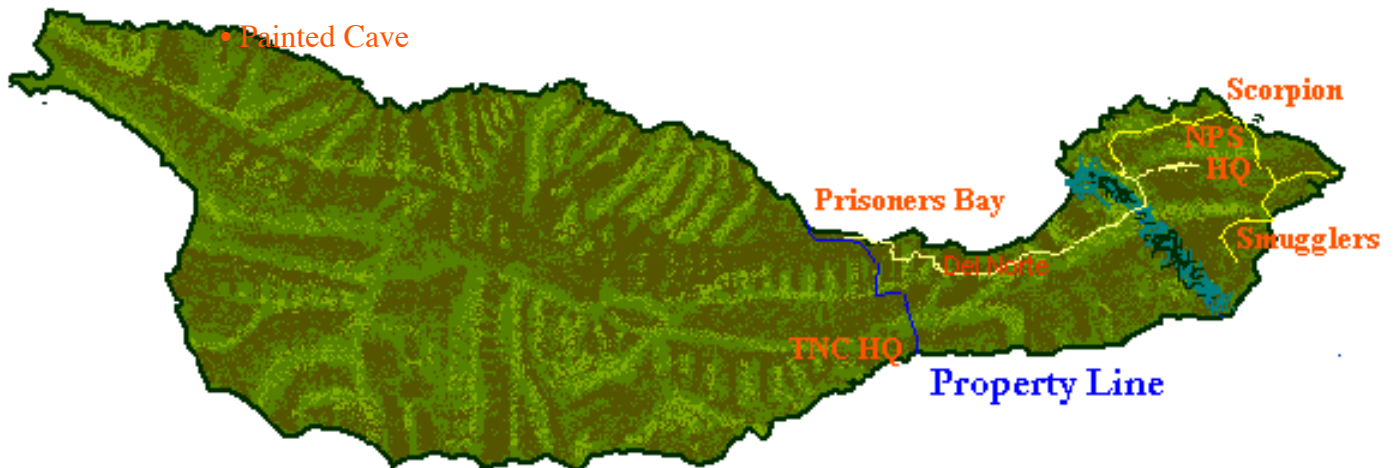
Island Scrub Jay



Pacific Tree Frog



Frazer Point



• Gull Island

Image from Channel Islands National Park

Scorpion Ranch Beach Habitat



The cobble and sand beach area at Scorpion is a great place to explore. Beach wrack (kelp, sea grass, and other natural debris) wash ashore and provide habitat for rock louse and beach hoppers which in turn provide food for shore birds and some intertidal organisms. During periods of low tides there are some limited tidepools near the man-made pier.

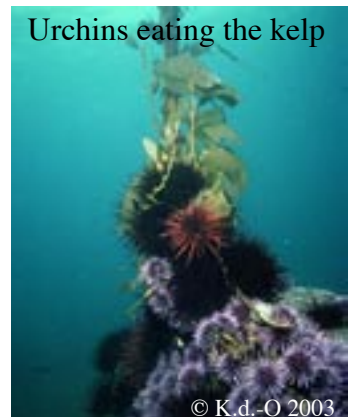


New State Marine Protected Areas



In October 2002, the State of California created the West Coast's largest network of marine reserves which is in the Channel Islands National Park and Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary. There are twelve fully protected zones and two conservation areas totalling 175 square miles. This represents about 10 percent of the Sanctuary waters. Santa Cruz Island now has three of these special protected areas. The Ocean area at Scorpion Ranch is a State Marine Reserve. Though the reserves are open for boating and diving, you are not allowed to remove any plants or animals from their natural habitat (no fishing). The Scorpion reserve has a shore-line length of 3.3 nautical miles and extends three miles out from the shoreline with a depth range of 0 to 750 feet. Gull Island State Marine Reserve is located on the south side of West Santa Cruz Island. There is also one SMCA on Santa Cruz Island, named Painted Cave State Marine Conservation Area. Painted cave is located on the north shore of the western portion of the island and is one of the largest known sea caves in the world.

Long term monitoring of the kelp forest revealed that the quality of the kelp forest habitat around the Channel Islands was declining. It is believed that the ecosystem was thrown out of balance by a combination of environmental conditions, as well as fishing. Some reefs today show low biodiversity, and many are overrun by urchins and sea stars. By creating these new protected zones, scientists hope that the area will be enhanced and restored to a more natural condition. In other places around the world, protected zones also enhanced local fisheries near the reserves, this is known as spill over effect.



Trip Logistics

- East Santa Cruz Island is about 20 miles from the from Ventura Harbor. Travel time on one of our high speed catamarans is about one hour. If you are traveling to the islands during the migration of the pacific gray whale (January-March), time on the boat may be extended to look for and observe whales.
- Island Packers recommends that you call: **(805) 642-1393** after 5:30AM on the day of your trip. This number will provide you with confirmation of your scheduled trip, or inform you of any cancellations due to unsafe sea conditions or inclement weather.
- Check your reservation information to confirm the time and location (Ventura or Oxnard) of your departure. Please plan to arrive at least 30 minutes prior to your departure time so you can check in at the office.
- Dress for outdoor activity, wear sturdy closed shoes for both your safety and comfort (no sandals please). Dress in layers, and bring a jacket since it can be cool and breezy even on a sunny day. Sunscreen, or a visor or hat can also make you more comfortable.
- Pack a lunch and beverages, as there are no snack bars on the island, and no running water. Some snacks and beverages can be purchased on the boat. Try to minimize paper and plastic wrappings, as you will have to keep all your waste with you since there are no trash cans or trash services on the island. Santa Cruz has pit style restrooms at several locations near the ranch and campgrounds.
- Please come to enjoy the isolation and natural beauty of the ocean and the islands. Bring a camera, binoculars or note pad, but leave electronic music and games at home.

We look forward to having you aboard!
www.islandpackers.com 805-642-1393

