



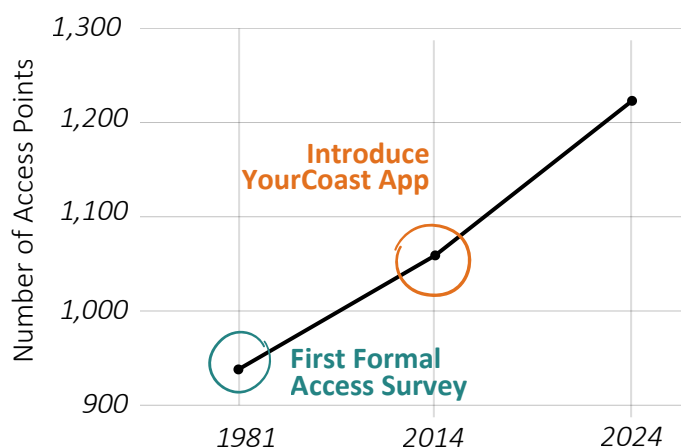
COASTAL ACCESS

California Coast and Ocean Report *Status, Progress, and What's Ahead* 2026

California's coast belongs to everyone, but getting there is not always easy. Since 1976, the California Coastal Act has protected the public's right to reach the state's beaches and rocky shores, recognizing that access to the ocean is essential to recreation, well-being, and California's identity. Even so, access remains limited in some areas where privately owned land or rugged terrain blocks the way.

STATUS

Coastal access has increased since the formation of the California Coastal Commission fifty years ago. Now, **more than half of California's coastline (55%) is within walking distance of a coastal access point.**



The number of coastal access points and parks managed by the California Coastal Commission have significantly increased since 1981.



PROGRESS

California has **added hundreds of new public access points** since the Coastal Commission was established 50 years ago, growing from under 900 to more than 1,200 today. The **YourCoast app**, launched to help people find coastal access sites near them, has been used by millions of Californians. The state has also **invested in making coastal access more equitable**, including **accessible facilities** for people with disabilities and adding new segments of the **California Coastal Trail** that open up stretches of coastline that were previously hard to reach.

LOOKING AHEAD

As sea levels rise, **some beaches may disappear** where the shoreline cannot move inland, threatening the public's ability to enjoy California's coast. But California is taking action. Through forward-thinking planning and targeted investments, the state is working to protect and expand coastal access for generations to come. The forthcoming statewide **Beach Resiliency Plan** will identify beaches most at risk from sea level rise and chart a clear path forward—guiding bold strategies to preserve public access as the shoreline changes.



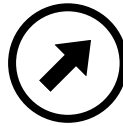
GREATER COASTAL ACCESS IN MORE POPULATED AREAS

2024 Status

Trend

Region

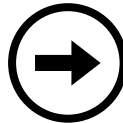
53%



NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Northern California, well known for its rugged coastline and inaccessible steep cliffs, has the least direct coastal access.

73%



CENTRAL CALIFORNIA

In Central California, coastal access is limited by cliffs, the Amtrak rail line, military land use, and privately owned large ranching areas along the Gaviota Coast in Santa Barbara County. Less than 3% of the Gaviota Coast, a 76-mile stretch of coast along the Santa Barbara Channel, has any public access, making it one of the least accessible regions in California.

77%



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Southern California has the most accessible coastline in the state.

Percentage of coastal miles in each region that are within walking distance of a public access point, excluding areas closed for military use or inaccessible steep cliffs. Arrows represent trends in the number of coastal access points over time.



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