Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is one of the richest, most diverse marine environments in the world. Wave-swept beaches, lush kelp forests, active tide pools and one of the deepest underwater canyons in North America are just a few of the habitats found within the sanctuary. Each of these vastly different environments teem with life, from tiny plankton to the largest animal that has ever lived on Earth—the blue whale.

**Sandy Beaches**

Sandy beaches offer a world of life that is totally out of sight. Worms, snails, crabs, smelt and clams live beneath the sand at the water’s edge, where shorebirds probe for a tasty meal.

**Seafloors**

Beyond the waves, much of the seafloor is covered with sand or mud. Here, crabs, snails, sea urchins and limpets seek shelter from the waves. No light reaches that is mostly out of sight. Worms, sand dollars, tubeworms and anemones are abundant here.

**Lush Kelp Forests**

 Supporting a rich array of life, including fish, seaweed, crabs, seahorses, anemones, sea stars and limpets, kelp can grow up to 10 feet a day, and over 100 feet above the ocean floor.

**Open Water**

 With the sun and wind, we have everything we need to make our ecosystem. Worms, sand dollars, tubeworms and anemones are abundant here.

**Deep Canyons**

 Despite the depth, the seafloor is covered with sand or mud. Here, sand dollars, tubeworms, anemones, sea stars and lingcod, kelp, and other creatures thrive.

**Tranquil Wetlands**

Elkhorn Slough, part of the sanctuary and one of California’s last great coastal wetlands, is an important feeding and breeding area for a wide variety of species. Some even produce their own light. Anemones, sea stars, small fish, anemones and more.

**Davidson Seamount**

A underwater mountain, is one of the largest in the world. From base to crest, it is 7,490 feet tall, or, if it were on land, would be 1,101 feet below the surface.

**Variety of Habitats**

Encompassing more than 5,300 square miles, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is one of the richest, most diverse marine environments in the world. Wave-swept beaches, lush kelp forests, active tide pools and one of the deepest underwater canyons in North America are just a few of the habitats found within the sanctuary. Each of these vastly different environments teem with life, from tiny plankton to the largest animal that has ever lived on Earth—the blue whale.

**A Special Place**

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary boasts picture-postcard scenery nearly everywhere you look—including amazing views from the sea, seals basking in soft beds of kelp and waves crashing wildly on a rocky shore. It is home to a rich array of marine life and diverse habitats. The sanctuary stretches along one quarter of the central California coast, and is deeper than the Grand Canyon at its deepest point.

**Things To Do:**

For those who love nature and outdoor activities, the sanctuary offers exciting adventures for everyone. Whether it’s watching whales, paddling among kelp forests or exploring tide pools, there is no more spectacular place to enjoy the ocean and outdoors.

**Sanctuary Visitor Centers**

Stop by one of our free interpretive centers to enjoy exciting, interactive exhibits. Knowledgeable volunteers are on-hand to answer your questions and enhance your understanding of the sanctuary.

**Coastal Discovery Center, San Simeon**

Located at William Randolph Hearst Memorial State Beach on beautiful San Simeon Bay, the center celebrates the sanctuary’s remarkable marine environment, as well as your personal role in protecting one of our nation’s special underwater treasures.

**Sanctuary Exploration Center, Santa Cruz**

Just steps away from the famed beach boardwalk, the center features state-of-the-art interactive and multimedia exhibits. Explore the sanctuary’s remarkable marine environment, as well as your personal role in protecting one of our nation’s special underwater treasures.

**SCUBA Diving**

Abundant sea life and kelp forests make Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary one of the world’s greatest SCUBA diving destinations.

**Fishing**

Enjoy breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean, eat, shop, stay at a sanctuary-recognized, accredited hotel or bed & breakfast, and experience the culture and natural history of the region.

**Boating**

Whether you’re an experienced sailor or a first-time boater, there’s an ideal experience for everyone. Monterey Bay offers a unique, interactive experience with nature. Many local businesses provide rentals, lessons and group tours.

**Paddle Sports**

Montana de Oro State Beach, just one hour from Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, is home to an amazing amount of diverse creatures.

**Surfing**

Looking for an exciting ocean adventure? No better place than the sanctuary’s rocky shores. During the day, you can discover all kinds of critters without getting wet.

**Whale Watching**

One of the world’s best land-based whale watching locations. Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is home to an amazing amount of diverse wildlife.

**Wildlife Viewing**

Enjoy breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean, eat, shop, stay at a sanctuary-recognized, bed & breakfast, and experience the culture and natural history of the region.

**Stewardship**

The sanctuary needs you! Be a volunteer and participate in beach cleanups, wildlife monitoring and more. Contact us to learn about all the great opportunities.

**MontereyBay.NOAA.gov**
**Wildlife Viewing**

- **Whales and Dolphins**
  - Outstanding place to see whales
  - 27 birds seen in the sanctuary
  - Some come seasonally, some year-round
  - Many travel between Arctic and Baja, CA

- **Sea Otters**
  - Use rocks to crack open shellfish
  - Help to prevent drifting away
  - Grow to keep their fur waterproof
  - Found in kelp beds or Eel River

- **Birds**
  - One of the best birdwatching sites in CA
  - Over 180 species of marine birds
  - Many forage on wetlands & beaches
  - Some only come to shore to breed
  - Many breed in kelp forests or Elkhorn Slough

- **Harbor Seals**
  - Agile swimmers; can leap out of water
  - Rest on offshore rocks
  - One of the best birdwatching sites in U.S.A.
  - Best seen in Año Nuevo & Piedras Blancas

- **Elephant Seals**
  - Most of their time is spent offshore
  - Agile, powerful, and have a noisy bark
  - Many breed in kelp forests or Elkhorn Slough

- **Sea Lions**
  - Intelligent, playful and have a noisy bark
  - Rest together on rocks and kelp
  - Hunt for fish and squid
  - Agile sealions, can leap out of water

- **Lobsters**
  - Found in kelp forests or Elkhorn Slough
  - Injuring or disturbing marine mammals, seabirds and sea turtles
  - Discharging or depositing materials into the water
  - Operating motorized personal watercraft, except within five designated areas
  - Fishing within or outside 12,000 feet of the shore
  - Boarding or powering vessels not a recreational vessel
  - Checking for gear while diving

**America's Underwater Treasures**

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries serves as the trustee for a network of underwater parks encompassing more than 780,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters from Washington State to the Florida Keys, and from Lake Huron to American Samoa. The network includes a system of 13 national marine sanctuaries and Papahānaumokuākea and Rose Atoll marine national monuments. For more information on the National Marine Sanctuaries, visit http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov

**Fun Facts**

- **Bluffy Bridge**
  - Located on the west side of a coastal canyon
  - Centered on the world’s oldest and the longest pedestrian tunnel, it links Ferris Point, the ceremonial site of the ancient Ohlone people, with the world’s first Baja California national monument, the Baja California National Marine Sanctuary

- **Lone Cypress**
  - One of the trees of Monterey Bay, the tree symbol of the sanctuary
  - A memorial planted in 1932, it is declared to be "one of the most photographed cypress in the world"