

Welcome to Point Pinole

Explore the hidden treasure of sparkling bay views, driftwood-endowed shoreline, lush marshes, rolling grass meadows, and shady eucalyptus groves in this 2,315-acre regional shoreline, open all year. You may discover remnants of the colorful 80-year history of explosives manufacturing on the point, which is today a state historic landmark. As you wander in the open peacefulness of this parkland, you can imagine the ranchos of the Spanish land grant era that once existed here, and the original Native American people who earlier used this area for fishing and gathering shellfish.

TRAILS The more than 12 miles of trails are mostly flat or gradually sloping dirt or gravel, with one asphalt trail for strollers, skaters, bicyclists, and the pier shuttle.

The Bay View Trail along the western shore affords easy access to the shoreline, from the flat terrain in the south to the high bluffs nearer the pier – the only shoreline cliffs along this part of the Bay. This trail is part of the San Francisco Bay Trail system, which rings the bay, and it offers uninterrupted views of Point Richmond to the south, and Mt. Tamalpais, China Camp State Park, and Marin County to the west. The Marsh Trail, which skirts the southern edge of Whittell Marsh, offers views of the north Bay, including Napa, Vallejo, the Carquinez Bridge, and San Pablo Bay. The climate at Point Pinole, one of the park’s unique charms, is always influenced by breezes and fog from the bay and offers a cool alternative to the hot inland weather.

FISHING FROM PIER OR SHORE A fishing license is not required to fish from the nearly quarter-mile-long pier at the end of the point, but California Fish and Game regulations apply for the number and size of fish that may be taken: check current regulations and signs posted at the pier for size and quantity limitations for sturgeon, striped bass, and other fish. Gaffing is not allowed.

A California state fishing license is required for persons 16 years or older to take any fish, mollusk, invertebrate, amphibian, or crustacean from the shoreline. Fishing licenses must be displayed above the waist at all times; failure to do so could result in a \$500 fine.

The fishing pier, at the end of the point and about 1.5 miles from the parking lot, was built in 1977 as a joint project of the East Bay Regional Park District and the California Department of Fish and Game. The spectacular views of the bay are a wonderful treat for hikers and bicyclists as well as anglers. **Please note: dogs are not allowed on the pier.**

A TOWN CALLED GIANT Scattered, oddly-shaped foundations and raised earth berms, sunken bunker areas, half-buried railroad ties, and wooden pilings give you a glimpse of life at Point Pinole during the 80 years that it was home to four explosives manufacturing companies. From 1880 to 1960, 2 billion pounds of dynamite were manufactured here; the danger of explosions from the dynamite and nitroglycerine manufacturing processes kept the point isolated from the public and otherwise undeveloped.

In 1881 Safety Nitro Powder Company was established near the pier on the northern shore, and coexisted with the farmers and ranchers there. It was served by a rail line that ran along the southern shore to the brick storage magazines (the sunken bunker areas near the pier) and ending at a shipping wharf east of the later Giant/Atlas pier and the present-day pier. Between 1882 and 1886 Granite Powder, the least known of the powder companies, operated near the northern end of Cook’s Point Trail, using the existing Kearny Ranch house and several outbuildings.

The next tenant at the point, the Giant Powder Co., has a fascinating history, only part of which was lived out at Point Pinole. Due to public outcry after major explosions, Giant was forced to leave its first locations: the San Francisco Mission District’s Rock House Canyon (now Glen Park playground) from 1868 to 1870, the sand dunes south of Golden Gate Park from about 1870 to 1879, and West Berkeley (now Golden Gate Fields) from 1880 to 1892.

When Giant finally ended up at Point Pinole after the 1892 explosion in west Berkeley, it consolidated with the existing Safety Nitro plant and renamed everything with the Giant name: Giant Station, Giant Village, Giant Highway, etc. By 1916-17 Point Pinole had become an industrial center and company town with its own railroad station, school, Craftsman-style bungalows and boarding houses for workers, and a privately owned recreation area called Giant Park with a dance hall, saloon, barbecue pits, bocce ball court, playground, and picnic gazebos. This early park closed after the owner lost his fortune in the stock market crash of 1929.

In 1915, three years after the *Titanic* sank and two years after the first moving assemblyline at the Ford Motor Co. in Michigan, the newly formed Atlas Powder Co. bought out Giant Powder, kept the Giant name, and trademark, and made many improvements. The manufacturing process was streamlined and mechanized, and some of the Chinese and women workers doing more

dangerous manual labor jobs were let go. During this period many safety features were introduced: earthen embankments and rows of eucalyptus around manufacturing buildings reduced the effects of explosions on surrounding areas; wooden railway rails and wooden walkways were used within 20 feet of manufacturing buildings to prevent sparks from causing explosions; changing clothes and showering after work reduced the accidental transport of explosive materials, and even prohibiting personal and political arguments and hangovers on the job!

The workers at Giant Powder included many ethnic groups: Portuguese, Italian, Slavic, Chinese, Anglo-Irish, Scottish, Scandinavian, German—only a few of whom were women under Giant’s ownership. The only women working here after Atlas took over were the “Dynamite Dorothys” during World War II.

The system of two broad-gauge and extensive narrow-gauge rail lines crisscrossing the point connected the Southern Pacific line at Giant Station with the dynamite operations. The narrow-gauge lines had four 3-ton electric mine locomotives, or “locies,” to transport dynamite within the operating area, two 12-ton gas-operated locomotives to serve the magazine area (dynamite storage), and two 5- to 8-ton locomotives in the safety area. The old pier had a single railroad track on it for loading barges—each of which carried 2,000 cases of Giant Powder—to freighters in the explosives anchorage for export to the Philippines, Central and South America, and Alaska.

World War II, with its new style of artillery, introduced ammonium nitrate as a new explosive, which soon could be produced for one-quarter the cost of dynamite—a development that led to the eventual closing of Atlas Powder’s Point Pinole facility in 1960.

In 1961 Point Pinole was briefly considered for the site of the NASA Mission Control Center that was eventually built in Houston. The land was then bought by Bethlehem Steel Company, which tore down most of the buildings in Giant Village. The chemicals were cleaned up and debris salvaged or buried, and the narrow-gauge railroad was sold for use at Disneyland. But the proposed billion-dollar steel plant on the point never materialized, and in 1971 the East Bay Regional Park District bought the first parts of what is now Point Pinole Regional Shoreline.

EARLY HISTORY Research indicates that the early Native American residents of this area were the Huchiun (Ohlone) tribe. Their permanent home was probably in what is now the town of San Pablo, with

a temporary camp near the northeast corner of the point, which they visited to gather crabs, mussels, clams, oysters, and fish. Their houses were shelters made from sticks and tule, and each village had a *temescal* or sweat lodge. Costanoan tribes in the area included the Karkins (Carquines) on both sides of the Carquinez Strait, the Alkans (Acalanes) in the Orinda-Lafayette-Moraga-Walnut Creek area, the Bolgones around Mt. Diablo, and the Pulpines near the southeast part of Mt. Diablo and San Joaquin River islands. Unfortunately, many of these early residents died in the 1833 outbreak of cholera and a smallpox epidemic in 1837.

The point was known as *Punta de Concha*, on a map surveyed for Spain’s “Sacred Expedition” to colonize the land north of Mexico, sometime between 1769 and 1776, when the Presidio of San Francisco was established. In 1823, just after Mexico won independence from Spain, Francisco Maria Castro was given the first land grant in the area, including all of what is now Point Pinole. He used the land for grazing longhorn cattle and sheep, but kept his residence at Rancho San Pablo, now the town of San Pablo. By 1860 the land had been sold to American and Irish-American ranchers and farmers, who eventually sold their land to the dynamite companies. The rail station called Sobrante Station was opened in 1878, with the nearby Croatian fishing village of Sobrante just a stone’s throw away on the northwest section of what is now referred to as Cook’s Point. Sobrante existed as a fishing village and weekend hunting and fishing retreat for wealthy San Franciscan gentlemen until World War I, when Atlas Powder bought out all the residents. By 1908 the point had taken on its present name.

FLORA, FAUNA, AND GEOGRAPHY The over 2,000 acres of grassland and eucalyptus forest are now home to a huge array of land, shore, and water birds (a list is available at the park). These include many types of hawks, egrets, herons, owls, hummingbirds, and the rare salt marsh song sparrow. Point Pinole is on the Pacific Flyway, so during migration season many types of birds visit here for a short time. It is also sometimes possible to glimpse overwintering, clustering monarch butterflies. Although the non-native eucalyptus trees planted in 1921-22 were introduced as a safety measure at Atlas Powder, they also provide habitat for many species not indigenous for this area. Other species that live here are the salt marsh harvest mouse, black-tailed deer, skunks, and non-poisonous snakes.

The Hayward Fault beneath the park is marked by 15 U.S. Geological Survey monuments.

Parkland Rules

Welcome to your Regional Parklands. Help protect park resources and ensure an enjoyable visit for everyone by complying with these rules and any posted regulations. The Park District’s Ordinance 38, which is summarized below, lists specific rules for use and protection of regional parklands. Violators will be subject to citation or arrest. For further information, ask a Park Ranger, Public Safety Officer, or telephone (510) 881-1833.

PARK GATES ARE OPEN to the public during hours posted at the park entrance. Unless otherwise posted, CURFEW is between the hours of 10 p.m. and 5 a.m., except for persons possessing a permit to remain on parklands.

MOTOR VEHICLES are restricted to designated parking areas and paved public roads.

BICYCLES may be ridden on designated bicycle trails, and on fire or service roads, unless otherwise posted. Bicycles are not permitted, either ridden, walked, or carried, in areas posted “No Bicycles,” or on narrow hiking or narrow equestrian trails. State law requires that all bicyclists under age 18 wear an approved helmet while riding on trails and roadways. Riders should call out or sound a warning when overtaking other trail users.

DOGS must be leashed (six-foot maximum) and under control at any posted area, parking lot, picnic site, lawn, or developed area. No dogs or other animals are permitted at any swimming pool, swimming beach, wetland, or marsh. Owners must always carry a leash (six-foot maximum). Dogs may be off-leash in open space and undeveloped areas of parklands, provided they are under control at all times. Dangerous animals are not allowed in the parks. Please dispose of your dog’s waste by placing it in a garbage can. Persons who walk more than three dogs at a time on Regional Parks trails must obtain a permit; commercial dog walkers are required to obtain a permit regardless of how many dogs they walk at one time (limit of six). Please call (510) 690-6508 for information.

SWIMMING, WADING and other water contact activities are permitted only in designated areas. **DIVING** is permitted only from designated diving boards and swim platforms. **SCUBA** diving is prohibited in any District lake or inland waters.

PLANTS, ANIMALS, GEOLOGIC, ARCHAEOLOGIC OR HISTORIC OBJECTS are protected by law. Please do not disturb or remove any of these features.

HELP PROTECT OUR PARK WILDLIFE by not releasing or feeding ducks, cats, or other animals. Do not feed wild park animals; enjoy them from a distance.

FIRES are permitted in barbecue pits or personal cooking equipment in designated picnic areas or irrigated turf areas only, placed at least 30 feet from flammable materials. Please do not place hot coals on the ground or in a garbage can. Dispose of hot coals or other burned fuel in barbecue pits or in designated hot coal disposal receptacles.

FIREWORKS are not permitted in any Regional Park.

CAMPING is not permitted within District parklands without a permit.

A state license is required to **FISH** at all regional parks. A District fishing permit is also required when posted.

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES are not permitted at pools, swim beaches, or within 50 feet of paved roads, parking lots, or posted areas. Otherwise, beer and wine are permitted at picnic areas and elsewhere on parklands.

GAMES and **ACTIVITIES**, including model rockets, model airplanes, hang gliding, golf, and other activities with potential risk to property or park visitors are permitted only in designated areas.

ASSEMBLIES, PERFORMANCES, SPECIAL EVENTS, or similar gatherings require a permit.

Please be considerate of other park visitors if you use a **RADIO**. A permit is required for **AMPLIFICATION** of voice, music, or other sounds.

FIREARMS or **BOWS AND ARROWS** are not permitted on Regional Parklands except at established ranges. Crossbows, spears, slingshots, air pistols or rifles, and other dangerous weapons are prohibited anywhere on regional parklands.

PARK VISITORS are responsible for knowing and following park rules.