

Introduction

The Lost Coast Trail could be considered as one of the most beautiful hikes in the United States. Many people travel to the California Coast to see the amazing ocean views, but while on the Lost Coast Trail, the views are part of the whole week. Backpackers enjoy amazing ocean views, sunsets, sea life and much more, for days straight.

The unique geographical location of the Lost Coast is the key to its popularity and its name. The Lost Coast has never been touched by highways, cities, subdivisions, or really any development. The reason for this being undeveloped is that the Lost Coast is tucked along the northern Coast of California, where large mountain ranges extend for 150 miles in from the ocean, and this block's its access from the outside world. The rough terrain forced the nearest highway to be 30 miles inland from the Coast. This nature of the Lost Coast has made it a backpacker's heaven, as the only way, as of today, to experience this section of Coast is by horse or by foot. The Trail offers 25.1 miles of hiking on the beach and then takes off into the mountains for the remaining 26 miles, through almost tropical-like terrain.

This Guide Book will provide useful information, giving hikers tools necessary to make successful the trip to one of the most spectacular coastal regions. The Guide provides all the necessary reservation, transportation, supply preparation, and navigation and safety information. It gives a step-by-step overview of the trail, camping locations, and points of interest, accompanied by photographs. This Guide is no ordinary guide, as the objective is to provide only the most important and quick information to hikers on their way to a great experience. Let's dig in...

Chapter 1:

Preparing for the Lost Coast Trail Hike

Reservations¹

The Lost Coast is very popular, so without regulations, it would be destroyed by careless abuse, improper burial of human waste, and trash. This is why the Bureau of Land Management requires hiking permits for any organized group. A family or a small group of friends do not need a permit. A hiking permit can be obtained by contacting the King Range Project Office. (See Appendix A for Contact Information) BLM does, however, require that every group of people has a fire permit to have a campfire or use any stove, lantern, or other product that has an open flame. A fire permit can be obtained by mail or by going to any California Ranger Station. (See Appendix A).

To preserve the natural habitat of the King Range, using bear canisters (See Section about Bears) is required for the first 25.1 miles of the Lost Coast Trail. Bear canisters can be rented from the King Range Arcata Field Office, Project Office, or Pertola Store, for \$5.00 per canister, per trip, with a \$75.00 credit card deposit per canister (required). Heavy fines will be issued to backpackers without a bear canister.

Quick Notes

1. Hiking and Campfire Permit

- a. Hiking permit required only for Organized Groups, not for family or friends.
- b. Campfire permit required for any open flame, including stove and lanterns.

¹ Bureau of Land Management. King Range National Conservation Area. BLM California Arcata Field Office. 19 Nov. 2005 < <http://www.ca.blm.gov/arcata/kingrange/index.html> >

2. Bear Canister Required!!

- a. All backpacker are required to use a bear canister in the 1st section (25.1 miles) of the Lost Coast Trail.
- b. Canisters can be rented at several King Range locations.

Transportation²

The Lost Coast is very remote; therefore, it takes roughly 5 hours to travel in a car from Usal Beach (ending point) to Mattole (starting point). If only the first part of the Coast is hiked, the drive is about 2.5 hours from Shelter Cove (ending point) to Mattole (starting point). The most common plan is to have multiple cars, with at least 2 cars to drive to the finish at Usal Beach; drop one off and drive back to the start point (Mattole) in the other car. For the full hike, transportation will need to be arranged to get from the end of the 1st section of the hike (25.1 miles at Shelter Cove) to the beginning of the 2nd section of the hike (Hidden Valley Trailhead). The only approved service available is through a lady by the name of Roxanne who will transport passengers and their gear for anywhere from \$50 to \$200 depending on the size of the group (See Appendix for contact info). The frugal minded hiker can choose to hike this section, but it is steep, uphill the whole way and nearly 5 miles long.

Quick Notes

1. **For full 51 mile hike** - From Usal Beach to Mattole, driving time is about 5 hours. Drop a car off at Usal beach before starting the hike at Mattole. For this hike, transportation needs to be arranged for getting from the end of the 1st part (Shelter Cove) to the beginning of the 2nd part (Hidden Valley Trailhead at Nadelos) (SEE MAP)

² Lost Coast California in Humboldt County Photo with Punta Gorda lighthouse. Beach California. 19 Nov 2005 <<http://www.beachcalifornia.com/lostcoas.html>>

2. **For the shorter 25.1 mile hike** - From Shelter Cove to Mattole driving time is about 2.5 hours. For this hike, drop off one of the cars at Shelter Cove before starting the hike at Mattole. (SEE MAP)

Chapter 2:

Supplies and Food

The following are recommendations for equipment and is by no means a list of essential equipment. All backpacker's have their own way of doing things and that is completely okay. Some people may need more than I recommend, others may need less. Use this section as a general guide to help decide what will be needed for the trip.

Backpack and Tent

The weather on average is pretty wet along the Lost Coast Trail. Pacific storms can bring in pouring rain, with 60-degree temperatures and then sunny weather at 85-degrees the very next day. A hiker of the Lost Coast Trail needs to be well-prepared for any kind of weather. Some of the most important pieces of equipment, as far as weather is concerned, are the backpack and tent. The backpack will keep everything dry while hiking and the tent will keep everything dry while sleeping.

There are two types of backpacks, internal frame and external frame. For the Lost Coast, it is highly recommended to use an internal frame backpack, as it will keep clothes and sleeping bag away from the weather better than the external frame type. Also, an internal frame backpack is better than an external frame for walking on unstable ground, such as rock and sand. Consult a local outdoors shop for information on finding the right backpack for body size and length of trip. I recommend at least a 4000 cubic inch backpack for a 3-5 day trip.

Along with a good backpack, a good tent is essential to making the most of this trip. There are many types of tents, but for the Lost Coast Trail, a 3-season tent with a full rain fly is a must. With the unpredictable amounts of moisture that may occur during the trip, a hiker will want to make sure and keep that water from getting into you sleeping area. A tent with a full rain fly will keep water out of the tent as well as leave room to cover some personal items from the rain and make it much easier to get a good night sleep. Tents with cheaper fiberglass poles are okay to use, but there's the risk that a pole could break while setting up and taking down the tent during the trips duration.

Clothing/Boots

Due to the variable weather conditions, wearing proper clothing and boots is very important as the threat of hypothermia from water and wind, and foot sores from adverse walking conditions is very real.

Clothing can be a best friend or a worst enemy. While hiking the Lost Coast Trail, storms may bring heavy rains, followed by heavy winds, causing severe conditions for backpackers not properly equipped. I highly recommend the use of clothes made from synthetic materials, since they will continue to insulate the body while being completely wet unlike cotton. The military have a saying "Cotton Kills," because the insulating properties of cotton go away when cotton becomes wet and cold.

Hiking boots are very important as they can stop a trip by themselves if the feet suffer from sores due to the boot. The long distances require that have boots that the fit feet and have been broken in avoid any rubbing spots. For the Lost Coast Trail, I recommend using a waterproof boot with a material such as Gortex. The moisture from the weather, rivers, or the ocean can make boots completely wet, and if that water gets inside, it can cause problems. A wet boot inside can cause skin to become soft, making that skin more susceptible to injury.

Tread and material of the boot, for the Lost Cost Trail doesn't matter too much, as the ground is fairly harmless. Contact a local outdoors store for information on types and proper sizing of a hiking boot.

Food and Water³

Food and water are necessary for survival, so they are always considered important. For any backpacking trip, it is highly recommended that all water be purified. For the Lost Coast Trail, for water sources that lead directly into the ocean, the water should be retrieved at least 100 ft. away from the ocean, as sometimes the fresh water can mix ocean water, from previous tides. For food, there is no guide as to what foods to eat and not eat, but it is important that whatever food is packed for each day provides anywhere from 2500-5000 calories, depending on the body weight. These calories are necessary to keep a body healthy, while putting it through backpacking stress.

³ Maniguet, Xavier. Survival: How to Prevail in Hostile Environments. New York: Facts on File. 1988.

Other Essential Supplies

There are many important supplies that should always be taken on a backpacking trip and the following list covers most of the bare essentials for any normal backpacking trip. Use this list as a starter to developing a personal list customized to your needs.

Shelter & Sleeping

Tent, poles, stakes
Ground cloth
Tarp, poncho
Sleeping bag
Sleeping pad

Clothing

Boots, shoes	Long-sleeve shirt
Low gaiters	Wind/rain jacket
Camp shoes/sandals	Swimming shorts
Socks & extras	Liner socks,xtras
Lightwt.underwear	Baseball cap
Fleece jacket	Fleece pants
Rain poncho	Wind/rain pants
Hiking shorts	Nylon windbreaker

Packing

Lash cord/straps
Garbage bags
Ziploc Freezer bags
Backpack
Rain cover

Cooking & Food

Cooking:

Cook pot
Utensils
Insulated cup
Stove & fuel
Piezo igniter
Matches/lighter
Water filter
Iodine
Water containers
Water bottle jacket
Bear Canister

Food:

Tea,coffee,cocoa
Electrolytes
Breakfast
Lunch/snacks
Dinners
Condiments/herbs
Vitamins
Emergency food

Essentials

Navigation:

Compass
Maps
Glasses/contacts
Paper, pencil
Headlamp
Small flashlight
Extra batteries
GPS unit
Guide book/notes

Other:

First-Aid kit
Prescriptn medicine
Waterprf matches
Sun glasses
Sun block/lip balm
Bug protection
Plastic whistle
Signal mirror
Knife
Rhuligel

Miscellaneous

Duct Tape	Pack towel	Toothbrush/powdr
Parachute cord	Bandana	Fishing Gear
Sewing kit	Toilet paper	Candle/oil lantern
Repair kits	Reading material	Soap
Rubber bands	Binocs,monocular	Cards, games
Camera,film,tripod		Walking stick
Clock, watch		Hiking Poles

Chapter 3:

Navigation/Safety

For a successful hike, having a planning is necessary, as it will make for a safe and organized trip and will allow others to know when and where a hiker will be at a given time. A plan includes estimated arrival and departure time from locations, maps that show these locations, and information about specific hazards that a hiker may come across. There are several key items that need to be included in a plan.

Day-by-day Plan

A plan needs to consist of day-by-day information that includes estimated departure and arrival times from prominent locations, maps of the area, and any important notes for the area traveled within that day. A full detailed map of the total hike area should be marked with a highlighter along the route and bold points at camping locations. The map with the use of a compass can give needed information to lead a hiker from start to finish. For safety, a map should be given to a relative, so that they can know where the hiker should be in case of a problem. Maps of the Lost Coast Trail can be ordered through the Arcata Field Office over the phone (See Appendix A). A GPS (Global Positioning System) is also very useful to give exact positions that can be used to track progress on the full map much easier than a compass. Contact a local outdoors shop for information on buying a GPS.

Cell Phone/Emergency Numbers

As a safety precaution, having a cell phone can be very helpful. There are several spots on the Lost Coast Trail that “Emergency Only” cell phone signals can be reached. A list of emergency contacts and health information should be created for all hikers in a group. This list

will allow emergency personnel to properly assess the state of emergency and contact people related to the incident.

Safety Skills/Precautions for coastal regions⁴⁵⁶

The Lost Coast Trail has many unique hazards that a hiker needs to be aware of in case they were to come across a hazard.

Bears

The most important hazard to be aware of is a bear. Bears near the Lost Coast Trail are harmless if proper precautions are taken to avoid them. The best way to prevent bears is to make your food a hard target for the bears. Bears are vary smart and are only looking for food, so by using an approved bear canister for food storage, a hiker will not be bothered. A bear canister should contain all foods, deodorants, or other items with fragrance. Hanging food is not considered an affective method of deterring bears, as they have figured out ways to get food from these methods. If confronted with a bear, make slow but large movements and loud noises to appear big. By waving arms in the air and slowly walking back and forth while yelling, the bear will think twice about hanging around. Other animals such Elk and deer can be seen on the trail and should be avoided to prevent scarring them.

Dead Animals

⁴ Breyfogle, Newell D. The Common Sense Medical Guide and Outdoor Reference. McGraw-Hill, Inc. 1981.

⁵ Maniguet, Xavier. Survival: How to Prevail in Hostile Environments. New York: Facts on File. 1988.

⁶ Wild Life Conservation Society. Saving Wildlife Bear resistant food canisters. 19 Nov. 2005 <<http://www.wcs.org/international/northamerica/Adirondacks/adirondackbbear/10212326>>

Along the Lost Coast Trail, it is possible that there will be dead animals along the way. Rotting animals contain a large amount of bacteria, which can become air born. It is recommended to stay far away from dead animals to prevent any risk of getting an airborne illness. Most of the time this will not be a problem, as the smell will deter hikers from getting close in the first place.

Tide Patterns

Tide Patterns are very important to be aware of when planning a hike. Tide charts will help determine the best times to start and stop along the hiking route. A high tide can block hiking access for many hours, so it is important to plan for hiking only while the tide is in medium to low. A tide chart can be obtained from the Arcata Field Office (See Appendix A).

Poison Oak

Poison oak can be found along the entire length of the Lost Coast Trail. It is recommended to not have exposed skin in areas with dense poison oak, as it only takes a simple touch to develop a rash which can become very severe. Avoid any plant that looks at all similar to poison oak shown in Figure 1. If a hiker does come in contact with poison oak, affected areas should be



Figure 1

thoroughly washed and any clothes should be

removed and washed with soap. If after several days, skin becomes red, rash-like, itchy, and has a burning sensation treatment should be administered. Place an anti-inflammatory gel or liquid, such as Johnson and Johnson's anti-itch gel called Rhuligel. Do not scratch as the skin irritation will spread to other areas of the body. To relieve itching, compressions of a salt-water soaked rag can be applied to the irritated skin.

Tick/Mosquitoes

With a moist semi-warm area, such as the Lost Coast, comes the threat of ticks. Ticks are very prevalent in the coastal region near areas with trees, grass, or even drift wood. Ticks will be seen, but to prevent them from biting, several precautions should be taken. First, it is important to recognize what a tick is. A tick is anywhere from 1/8 inch to 1/4 inch long. They are hard, small, flat oval shaped brownish bugs shown in Figure 2.

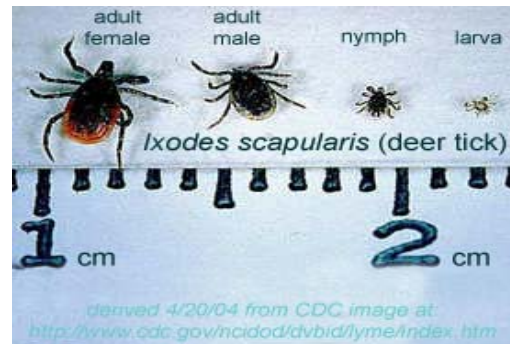


Figure 2

Second, ticks only climb up, so if a hiker tucks their pants into their socks, and their shirt into their pants, it will allow time for the tick to be noticed before it

gets to skin. Third, if the hiker wears dark clothes, ticks can be seen much easier compared to light clothes. If the tick does manage to bite into the skin, irritation is likely to occur and special treatment will be required to remove the tick. To remove a tick, swab it with alcohol or gasoline to cause the tick to back out of the skin. A match, hot amber, or cigarette can also be used.

Using tweezers can work, but need to be done slowly and carefully to make sure the head of the tick is not left inside of the skin. Do not crush the tick. If the area continues to be irritated after a couple hours, seek further medical attention. Another bug that may cause some annoyances is Mosquitoes which can be very heavy in forest areas of the Lost Coast Trail. It is recommended to have a mosquito head net and bug spray to deter the mosquitoes from annoying a hiker.

Basic First Aid

-Hypothermia

As mentioned in the previous chapter, with rain and wind, hypothermia is possible on the Lost Coast Trail. Hypothermia is when the body's core temperature drops to the point where muscular and mental functions are affected. Hypothermia is the leading cause of death in the

wilderness and needs to be treated at the very first sign. The early stages of hypothermia begin with shivering, goose bumps, loss of accurate function of the hands, undue fatigue, and confusion. At the first sign of these symptoms, every effort needs to be taken to get the person to a warm and dry spot away from wind. The goal is to prevent further heat loss, get the person warmed up, and to monitor any further signs of complication such as difficulty breathing. The key ideas are warm and dry. Remove any wet clothing to prevent further loss of heat. One of the most affective ways of warming a person up is human-to-human contact with someone that has a normal body temperature. Using a sleeping bag or blanket to insulate the heat from the bodies during human-to-human contact is highly recommended. If warm water is available, it is okay to put the person into water from 102 to 110 degrees Fahrenheit. Always continue to watch over the person, as violent shivering will occur as the person recovers from hypothermia. In any case of hypothermia, it is recommended to watch for complications after the incident and to report any problems to a doctor immediately.

-Dehydration

Through heavy activities, people often don't take in enough water to replace water loss by sweating, breathing, and using the bathroom. The earliest sign of dehydration is thirst. The average person should intake 2 to 3 quarts of fluids per day. During physical activity, such as hiking, a person should intake 6 to 8 quarts of fluids per day. A person also needs up to 15 grams of salt per day, as the salt helps with water retention. The easiest way to check for dehydration is to check the color of the person's urine. A dark yellowish or brownish orange color means that the person has become dehydrated. The symptoms can be dizziness, extreme thirst, dry cotton mouth, difficulty speaking, extreme fatigue, nausea, and fever. Treatment includes avoidance of heat and energy loss and replacement of fluids and salt. A person

suffering from dehydration may have loss of appetite, but needs to be forced to drink small amounts of fluids with salts and sugar.

-Severe Injuries

For any severe injury, medical personnel need to be contacted as soon as possible. Getting to a location with emergency cell phone reception is the best method of contact while on the Lost Coast Trail. During the wait for medical attention, it is important to keep the injured person immobilized. The person should also be kept hydrated with liquids unless the location of the injury is possibly near the head or neck. Also, keeping the person awake is very important as sleep can cause the persons condition to worsen.

Chapter 4

Hiking the Lost Coast Trail⁷⁸⁹

Hiking the Lost Coast Trail can be done in a short time or a long time depending on a hiker's desire. Along the Lost Coast Trail there are various locations which are suitable for stopping and camping. This chapter will list recommended camping locations separated by no more than 15 miles and give information about each area and the areas leading up to the that location. This list is not a complete list of all possible camping spots, but rather just a list of some of the best spots to camp at along the whole Lost Cost Trail.

⁷ The Lost Coast - King Range & Sinkyone Wilderness. Above California. 19 Nov 2005
<<http://www.abovecalifornia.com/routes/description.php?id=11&page=1>>

⁸ Bob Lorentzen and Richard Nichols. Lost Coast Romance - Shelter Cove to Hidden Valley Trailhead. GORP. 19 Nov. 2005 <http://gorp.away.com/gorp/location/ca/lost_co4.htm>

⁹ Bureau of Land Management. King Rand Nation Conservation Area. BLM California Arcata Field Office. 19 Nov. 2005 <<http://www.ca.blm.gov/arcata/kingrange/index.html>>

Mattole Beach Campground – Northern most part of the Lost Coast Trail

The recommended route of this Guide is to start the Lost Coast Trail from this point, as it has car parking, restrooms, and campsites to stay on the night before beginning the adventure.



Mattole Beach Sunset

The campground is self-pay, has 9 campsites, and costs \$5 per night. There is no water supply, so water will need to be pumped from the near-by creek.

Mattole to Spanish Creek Canyon

From Mattole to Spanish Creek there are some very interesting landmarks. The trail hardly exists as really it is just the beach shore. The hike is flat, but slow due to the sand. About 2.9 miles from Mattole, two old wooden shacks/houses can be seen right off the trail. The houses were most likely built as support to the near-by Punta Gorda lighthouse. The houses are still occupied, so it is best to stay away from the private property. About .3 miles further



Punta Gorda Lighthouse

past the houses, is the Punta Gorda lighthouse which was built in 1910 and opened by 1911. Because of its remoteness, workers had to live out on the Lost Coast and supplies would have to be brought in by horse or wagon from the nearest city of Petrolia. After World War II this lighthouse was determined to be too costly to maintain and was replaced by a floating lighted buoy in 1951. Near Punta Gorda there are a lot of rocks which sea lions can be found. Keep your eye out for these cute sea animals, just don't bother them. The trail continues on firm ground for a while until moving back on to the sandy beach. About 5.2 miles from Punta Gorda is Spanish Flat. Spanish Flat is a good camping location as there are open flat areas near the mountains to

set up camp. Spanish Creek is near-by to use as a water source. The plant growth is very heavy in this area, so the poison oak can be seen all over.

Spanish Creek to Big Flat

Between Spanish Creek and Big Flat, the trip is about 7 miles and runs along sandy beaches and some hard ground trail. There are several private residence tucked in along the Lost Coast between these two points. Big Flat is one of the biggest and best spots to camp at as it is very open and has a large creek running near it. There is a lot of drift wood that can be found to be used as places to sit and relax; just be aware of ticks. The creek is large and is perfect to wash up in. The water is very cold, but the refreshing feeling of being clean is worth the coldness. This is a good short section, so it is recommended to get a lot of rest before the next days hike.

Big Flat to Black Sands Beach at Shelter Cove

This is the last section of the first half of the Lost Coast Trail. The hike is a long 8.3 miles with some tough rock passes which are impassible during high tides. Tide charts need to be used to figure out the most appropriate time to cross the rock areas.



Shelter Cove

Extreme caution needs to be taken as the rocks can be as slick as ice. The last several miles are nice and flat, but are extremely sandy and are difficult to walk quickly. At the end of the section, it will lead to a parking lot with restrooms. This is considered the end of the shorter 25.1 mile hike. For the longer 26 mile hike, this is where Roxanne will pick up passengers and their luggage to deliver to Nadelos Campground. Nadelos Campground is also a self-pay campground that cost \$5 per night. The mosquitoes are very heavy in the wooded areas. The Shelter Cove general store is located along the road to Nadelos campground, which can be nice to take a break from backpacking food.

Nadelos Campground to Bear Harbor

The trail starts off right at Nadelos campground and begins by heading up a steep climb up Chemise Mountain. Between the mosquitoes and the humidity, this area can get rather tiring. Luckily, at the top it becomes flat and clear of mosquitoes for a while.



Bear Harbor beach

After some decent, the trail heads back into heavily wooded terrain which becomes tropical-like during certain parts of the year. Take a break at the bottom of the downhill, as the next part becomes the most incredibly steep switchbacks imaginable. After several miles of this steep hiking, the trail descends into Whale Gulch and then becomes pretty flat all the way to Bear Harbor. Bear Harbor is a nice area, but it can be hard to find big campsites. Campsites can be found towards the ocean or up trail in the mountains. There are outhouses, but as one can imagine they are not the nicest facilities.

Bear Harbor to Wheeler

From Bear Harbor there are some really nice ocean views and forest groves. This part of the trail consists of fairly easy hiking and within about 2 miles there is a visitor's center with fresh water, bathrooms, and a nice museum about the area. From here it is only a short 3.6 miles to Wheeler. There will start to be a lot of Elk along the trail. This is one of the nicest stops to camp as it has several streams and has a maintained outhouse with toilet paper. Wheeler use to be a small town with a logging community that had a school. It was open in 1950 and closed in just 10 years. Some remnants still remain in the area. This is a short day to spread out the distances, but hiking straight through to Little Jackass cove is an option that some hikers choose. The ticks are pretty bad in this area, so be prepared with the right clothing.

Wheeler to Little Jackass Cove

The hike from Wheeler to Little Jackass is pretty hard and the chances of seeing Elk are really good. The elk can be fairly intimidating as they have huge antlers and they look very muscular. Just slowly walk by them without making any sudden movements to scare them. Little Jackass is a good spot to stop, but has very few good camping sites. The beach is really nice at Little Jackass.

Little Jackass to Usal Beach

This is a tough 9 mile hike to Usal beach, as the trail heads straight up a mountain and continues for a while, before coming to a high point and heading straight down to Usal beach. This is the last part of the long hike, so the thought of being done



Usal Beach

helps numb the pain in hiker's knees. Once again the ocean views are very good from the high point of this section. The ascents and descents finally end at a nice campground at Usal beach that has bathrooms and fire pits. Water still will need to be pumped from the stream. This is the location that cars were dropped off at, so a group of drivers will need to take the car at Usal beach and pick up the cars back at Mattole to turn around back to Usal beach to pick the hikers up.

Conclusion

This guide provided the essential information to getting a hiker on their way to successfully hiking the Lost Coast Trail. There is a lot more detail and variations that relate to the Lost Coast Trail, but this guide makes planning a hike of the Lost Coast Trail quick and easy. There are many additional resources that accomplish different aspects related to the Lost Coast Trail. For

further information on hiking the Lost Coast Trail, search the internet for “Lost Coast Trail”, contact the Arcata Field office in California, or go to your nearest library for books about the Lost Coast Trail. Happy Hiking!

Appendix A

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California Rangers Stations
Website: <http://www.ca.blm.gov/fieldoffices.html>