



# Caspers Wilderness Park

DAY USE: 7:00 A.M. – SUNSET | TRAILS: MAY BE CLOSED FOR UP TO THREE DAYS FOLLOWING RAIN

33401 Ortega Highway  
P.O. Box 395  
San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675  
949-923-2210

WILDERNESS  
PARK

*Caspers Wilderness Park is an 8,000-acre protected preserve nestled among the river terraces and sandstone canyons of the western coastal Santa Ana Mountains. The largest park in the OC Parks system, its many fertile valleys are complemented by groves of native Coastal Live Oak and magnificent stands of California Sycamore. Seasonal wildflower displays and running streams add to this wilderness park's rich beauty, and abundant wildlife can be seen from the park's numerous trails.*

## WHAT THERE IS AT CASPERS WILDERNESS PARK.



## A BRIEF HISTORY.

The land that is now Caspers Wilderness Park was originally occupied by the Juaneños, a hunting and gathering tribe of native American Indians. Spain took control of the area beginning with the arrival of the Portola Expedition in 1769. Spanish land grants followed, with Juan Forster acquiring 226,000 acres, the Rancho Santa Marguerita y las Flores, in the 1840s.

Early in the 20th century, the O'Neill family acquired all of the rancho within Orange County and established the Rancho Santa Marguerita Company. In 1941, the O'Neills sold a parcel of 10,152 acres to Eugene Starr, and the property, with Bell Canyon serving as its backbone, became the Starr Ranch. Following Starr's death in 1963, the Starr Foundation was established to manage the property.

In 1973, the foundation deeded the northern portion of the ranch to the National Audubon Society for a wildlife sanctuary. The southern portion, 5,500 acres, was later purchased in 1974 by the Orange County Board of Supervisors under the direction of Chairman Ronald W. Caspers for use as a regional park.

In April 1974, the Starr Viejo Regional Park was opened as a wilderness day use and camping facility. Later that year, Ronald W. Caspers, along with members of his family and friends, was lost at sea off the coast of Baja California, and the Board of Supervisors changed the name of the park to Ronald W. Caspers Wilderness Park in his honor.

In 1984, the park was expanded to its present size of approximately 8,000 acres through the acquisition of additional land from the Rancho Santa Marguerita Company.

## WATCH FOR FOSSILS.

This entire park used to be covered by the Pacific Ocean. If you keep a sharp eye out, especially in the park's riverbeds, you might see marine fossils that have washed down from the surrounding hills.



## RANGER'S RECOMMENDATION.

"Take a walk through Cathedral Grove on the Nature Trail. You can stroll under a beautiful, shady canopy provided by the Sycamores and Live Oaks. If you're quiet, you might be able to spot a mule deer grazing on the grass."

## BELL CANYON TRAIL. WHAT AN INTERESTING NAME.

Nearly every trail name has a story behind it. Bell Canyon Trail leads through Bell Canyon. And Bell Canyon's name comes from a local legend that said Native Americans would strike a certain large boulder with a rock, causing the large boulder to ring like a bell throughout the canyon.

## TAKE YOUR HORSE RIDING AND CAMPING.

Caspers Wilderness Park has equestrian facilities not only for riding, but also for camping. You can ride all day, then serenade your horse and fellow campers at night with your six-string and harmonica.



## A BEAUTIFUL WAY TO GET WATER.

Located in the Old Corral day use area is a historic windmill. It was originally used to pump water from a 50-foot deep well to a nearby cattle trough. It's no longer used to pump water, but it still brings enjoyment to those who view it.



## WISH YOU COULD DO MORE? YOU CAN.

It's a big job maintaining a wilderness park. If you feel like pitching in, we can always use an extra set of hands. Volunteer opportunities include trail docents (guides), mountain bike trail assistants, backcountry trail maintenance and more. If you're over 18 and feel like getting some exercise that also benefits others, please call the park office.

## DO YOUR KIDS LIKE TO HIKE?

They won't know until they try. For many people, their first walk along a shady dirt path begins a lifelong love and appreciation for the amazing beauty and magnificence that's found only in nature.



## BIKERS WELCOME.

If you like to view the world over a pair of mountain bike handlebars, Caspers Wilderness Park offers both strenuous and leisurely mountain biking trails. There are enough of both here to keep you happy, visit after visit.

## SORRY BOY, NOT THIS TIME.

We're dog lovers too, but wilderness parks just aren't the right parks for dogs. Dogs affect the native animals in unnatural ways. When marking their territory, dogs signal the animals that there's a predator in the area, which affects feeding and even breeding patterns. We know your dog is part of the family, but when you visit Caspers Wilderness Park, please leave him or her at home.

**RANGER OFFICE HOURS:** MON. – FRI. 8:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M.

**CAMPING:** CHECK-IN 2:00 P.M., CHECK-OUT 12:00 P.M.

For interpretive hikes and astronomy programs, contact the Park Ranger at 949-923-2210.

Presentations at the park or at your school or organization may be arranged for a nominal fee.

866-OC PARKS | [casperspark@ocparks.com](mailto:casperspark@ocparks.com) • [www.ocparks.com/caspers](http://www.ocparks.com/caspers)

**LIKE CASPERS WILDERNESS PARK? YOU'LL LIKE THESE PARKS, TOO.**

ALISO AND WOOD CANYONS WILDERNESS PARK • LAGUNA COAST WILDERNESS PARK • LIMESTONE CANYON AND WHITING RANCH WILDERNESS PARK • RILEY WILDERNESS PARK • TALBERT NATURE PRESERVE • O'NEILL REGIONAL PARK

OC Parks has been entrusted with the care and protection of this park. Help us preserve our county's natural and cultural resources for you and your fellow guests' future enjoyment. Please check with your Park Ranger for this park's specific rules, or see them online at [www.ocparks.com](http://www.ocparks.com).

