

58 LANDS END



KEY AT-A-GLANCE INFORMATION

LENGTH: 2.8 miles

CONFIGURATION: Out-and-back

DIFFICULTY: Easy

SCENERY: Coastline

EXPOSURE: Mix of shade and sun

TRAFFIC: Heavy

TRAIL SURFACE: Dirt fire road and trail with many steps

HIKING TIME: 2 hours

SEASON: Good anytime

ACCESS: Free

MAPS: Trail map (under glass) at the trailhead's information signboard and at the website in **Contacts**, below. *The Walker's Map of San Francisco*, published by Pease Press, shows all trails in the area (\$7.95; peasepress.com).

FACILITIES: Restrooms, water, and food at the visitor center

SPECIAL COMMENTS: Dogs welcome if leashed or under voice control. Be mindful of the additional dog regulations posted along the trails.

CONTACTS: 415-426-5240, parksconservancy.org/visit/park-sites/lands-end.html

DRIVING DISTANCE: 5.5 miles from the San Francisco Civic Center



GPS INFORMATION

N37° 46.856' W122° 30.702'

IN BRIEF

Lands End is a rugged bit of coastline in the northwest corner of San Francisco, around the bend from the historic Cliff House and the flat expanse of Ocean Beach. Locals come here to jog or walk the trails, while tourists enjoy the views of the Golden Gate Bridge.

DESCRIPTION

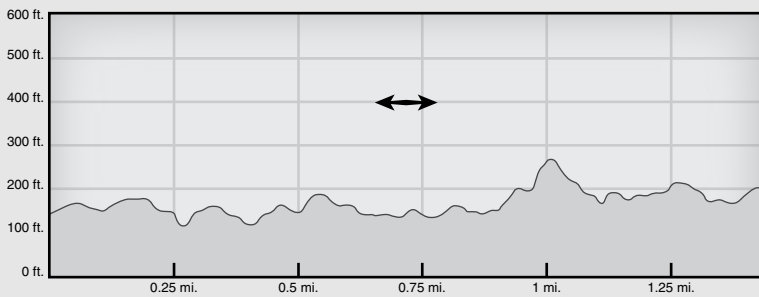
Coastal Trail is the “main street” at Lands End, popular with local runners, dog-walkers, stroller-pushing parents, and folks from out of town. Camino del Mar Trail runs along the bluff above Coastal Trail, departing from the War Memorial parking lot and ending near the Palace of the Legion of Honor. You can make a loop of both trails, but I don't recommend it, as this loop entails walking down the middle of a street dedicated to museum parking as well as a sidewalk past the museum and golf course.

In addition to trekking out and back on Coastal Trail, hikers can explore spur paths leading to the Sutro Bath ruins and Lands End proper. Veteran hikers will likely find Coastal Trail lovely but tame. The round trip to Eagle's Point is less than 3 miles, and the elevation change (albeit for two sets of steps) is slight. It's a good choice for beginners because it's an out-and-back hike—simply head back to the trailhead when you've had enough.

Directions

Lands End is in northwest San Francisco. Drive west on Geary Boulevard, which, past 39th Avenue westbound, becomes Point Lobos Avenue. Continue west on Point Lobos, cross 48th Avenue, and turn right into the parking lot, on the right side of the street—if you reach the Cliff House, you've gone too far.

Lands End





Sun filters through Monterey pines on Coastal Trail.

If you're new to San Francisco, or to hiking, do use caution at Lands End: Stay back from the steep, unprotected drop-offs along some stretches of the trail, stay on the trails, and learn to recognize and avoid poison oak. I would not normally issue these cautions, but it's not uncommon for folks to get lost or stranded at Lands End, particularly on the rocks at the coastline. Don't wreck your day with a helicopter rescue!

Begin from the parking lot at Merrie Way. A big, pleasant parking lot and an information display greet you. A visitor center hosts interpretive displays, restrooms, and a cafe. Ascend a few stairs to a kiosk with a map and information about Lands End; then begin hiking on Coastal Trail. Tall Monterey pines tower over a restored area with a lovely assortment of native plants, including buckwheat, bush lupines, coyote brush, monkeyflower, lizard's-tail, and yarrow. Just before the wide paved trail sweeps back to the right, a signed trail descends left to the Sutro Bath area. Continue straight on Coastal Trail.

A second gentle curve swings the trail north again, climbing slightly. Where a second paved trail enters from the right, bear left. Soon you'll reach the first interpretive panel—although Lands End appears relatively untouched by civilization, a railroad ran along the coast here in the 1880s, and in the 1900s ships wrecked on the rocks (some sharp-eyed hikers can spot the wrecks during low tide). Visit on a foggy day and get an earful of the foghorns described on one panel—each horn has a different tone to assist ships navigating through our local pea soup.

At 0.3 mile, Coastal Trail reaches a signed junction and overlook. On a clear day, views sweep north across the water to the Marin Headlands and the Golden Gate Bridge. A set of steps leads up the War Memorial area, but our route straight, continues on Coastal Trail.

A retaining wall on the right holds up a hillside dotted with Monterey pines. At a second overlook, the trail shifts to dirt but remains nearly flat—if you're visiting with a stroller or in a wheelchair, you'll most likely want to turn around here. Beware a massive hedge of poison oak on the left shortly before Coastal Trail passes an unmarked path heading uphill on the right. Continue straight. The trail rolls up and down a bit over loose, sandy soil. Another trail, this one signed, breaks off to the right. Again, continue straight on Coastal Trail.

Thickets of willow and cypress crowd the trail. Cheerful orange-colored nasturtiums drape over the trailside shrubs; you might also see poison hemlock, with white, lacy flowers and purple-blotched stems. At 0.8 mile, a paved trail enters from the right, leading up through the Lincoln Park golf course to the Palace of the Legion of Honor. Continue left on Coastal Trail.

Shortly past the junction, a signed trail near the emergency call box heads downhill to the left, leading to the actual Lands End—a nice side trip to a rocky beach (not described here), but note that the climb back up is rough.

On Coastal Trail, a set of ascending steps brings the easy section of this hike to an end. Look for native strawberry and yerba buena plants on the grassy hill to the right. The trail crests and almost immediately begins to drop, again on steps. Eucalyptus and cypress trees shade the trail and screen most of the view, but as the trail sweeps downhill a dramatic vista north across the Golden Gate opens up.

The trail hugs the coast, then turns slightly inland near Deadman's Point, passing through more eucalyptus before emerging with sweet coastal views, now including the posh Sea Cliff neighborhood slightly to the northeast. You may see or hear some common Bay Area birds here, including chickadees and a variety of sparrows. At 1.4 miles, the golf course is visible on the right and Coastal Trail reaches Eagle's Point on the left.

The trail ends here, at 32nd Avenue and Camino del Mar. After soaking in the views, retrace your steps back to the trailhead.