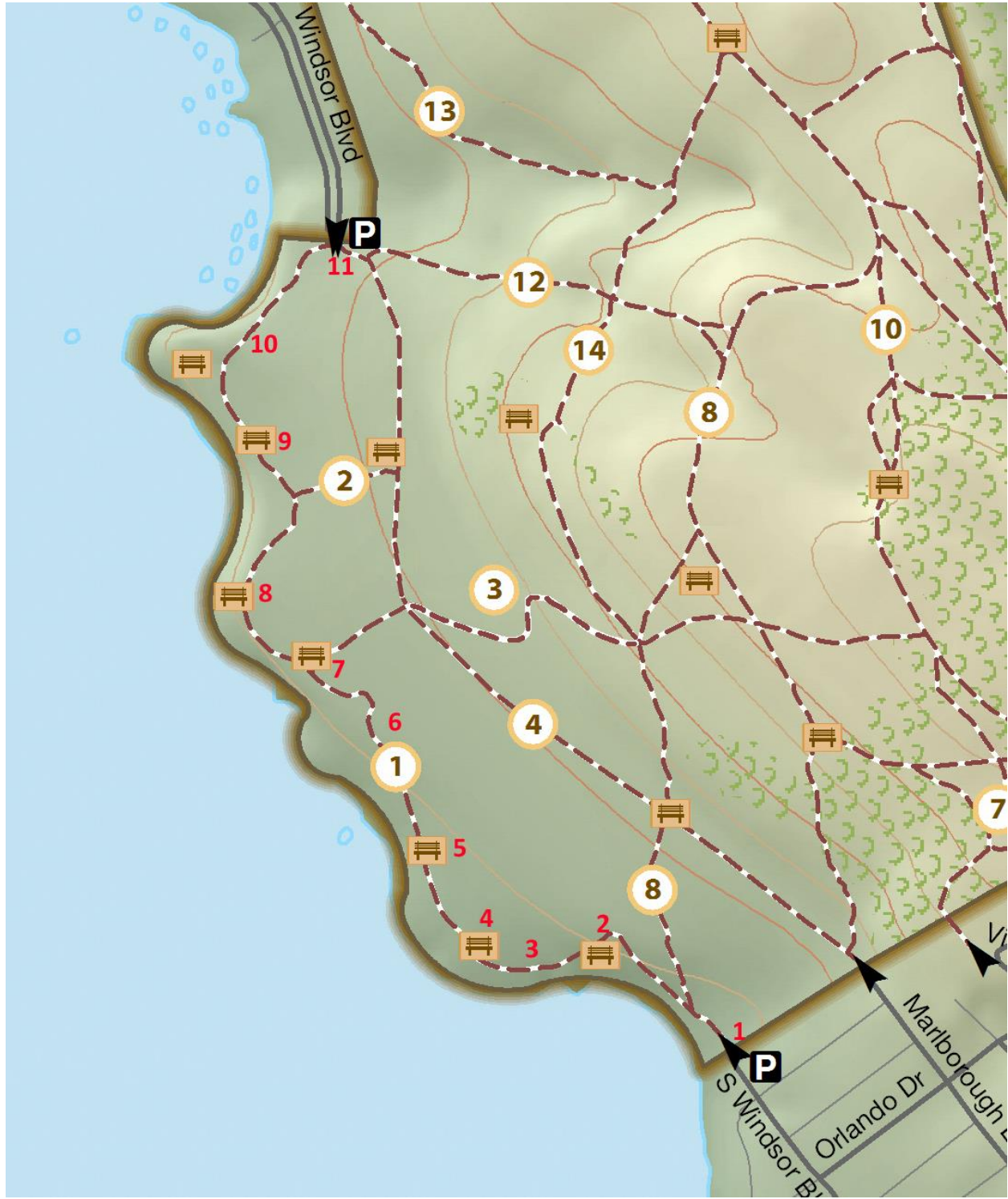


FISCALINI RANCH PRESERVE

Bluff Trail Self-guided Tour Stops



1. Bluff Trail South Entrance at map

Fiscalini Ranch Preserve includes Monterey pine and oak forests, coastal sage scrub, and a mile-long coastal bluff. We are going to focus on what you can see along the Bluff Trail, starting by walking around Otter Cove.

Fact: More than 150 different native plants and 430 species of birds are found on the Ranch.



Looking uphill to the Monterey pine forest.



Looking along the Bluff Trail.

2. Tide Pool Information Panel

Sometimes it's easier to see seaweed in Otter Cove than otters. The lumpy bits on the water's surface are mostly kelp. At low tide, you can see algae growing on the rocks. Many animals eat kelp and algae.

Fact: At least 50% of the world's oxygen comes from algae and marine plants.



Otter Cove at high tide (seaweed hard to see).

3. Top of Otter Cove Hill on path

Harbor seals like to stay near shore and are often seen in Otter Cove. This is a popular “haul-out” site where harbor seals rest, warm up, and raise pups on the rocks. Watching seals from the bluff is fun for people and keeps the seals safe.

Fact: Harbor seals grow from 25 pounds at birth to around 250 pounds when fully grown.



Rock shelf in Otter Cove where harbor seals often haul out.



Two harbor seals on rocks in Otter Cove.

4. Wave-shaped Wooden bench

Many of what look like heads offshore belong to kelp, not sea otters. Kelp is anchored to the ocean floor, so kelp "heads" go under when waves pass. Otters float on the surface, so usually ride the crest of the waves. Look carefully and you may find a sea otter.



Fact: Sea otters spend all their time in the ocean, even when they are sleeping.



Otter in orange circle riding the crest of the wave.

5. Live Edge Bench

When it is clear, this is a good place to see a long way. Looking south (left), you can see beyond Otter Cove. To the north is the lighthouse at Piedras Blancas with the Big Sur coast beyond that. Altogether the view takes in more than 15 miles.



Fact: From this point, you can see about 6 miles out to the horizon. Further up hill, you will be able to see farther.



Looking north toward Big Sur on a cloudy day.

6. Grinding rock

Present-day Salinan and Northern Chumash Tribes both have ancestors who thrived on this area's marine and terrestrial resources. These mortars carved out of bedrock are places where Native Americans ground seeds and acorns into flour.



Fact: Humans have lived around Cambria for at least 9,000 years.



Follow the path from the main trail to this group of rocks and shrubs.



People wore these holes into the bedrock by grinding seeds here.

7. Arched Bench

California ground squirrels eat the seeds and small insects that they find in the coastal sage scrub growing here. They dig burrows where they store extra food and raise their young. Their burrows are at least five feet long and may be used by many generations of squirrels.



Fact: California ground squirrels use cheek pouches to carry seeds back to their burrows where they store the food to eat later.



Ground squirrel burrows.



A ground squirrel on a bush lupine.

8. Schmidt Bench (off main trail)

From the Bluff Trail you can spot whales traveling up and down the coast. Whales breathe quickly when they surface, exhaling a misty spray of water straight up into the air. Whitecaps look more solid and spread low across the water. Keep an eye out and maybe you will see a whale.



Fact: Whales exhale 90% of their lung capacity with each breathe. Humans exhale 15%.



Whale spouting water into the air.

9. Driftwood Bench

The invasive ice plant here is from South Africa. Although it is common on coastal bluffs, the heavy leaves and shallow roots of ice plant may cause bluffs to fall into the sea. On the Ranch, we remove ice plant so native plants can return to hold the bluffs in place and support local animals.



Fact: Native sea cliff buckwheat supports more than thirty types of butterflies and moths.



This is ice plant from South Africa.

10. Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary

Conservation does not stop at the shore: This is the boundary between two zones of marine protection. From here north (right) is the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. To the south is White Rock State Marine Conservation Area. These preserves protect marine habitats and support fish nurseries.



Fact: Fish numbers, size, and diversity are two to five times higher in marine protected areas.



The marine sanctuary runs 275 miles up the coast past San Francisco.

11. Bluff Trail North Entrance at map

Many trails lead uphill from here, but to get back to where you started, follow the wide Marine Terrace Trail south. As you go, look for whales offshore and birds overhead. You may even see a ground squirrel!

Fact: Fiscalini Ranch Preserve is owned by the people of Cambria and California and cared for by its volunteers and supporters.



Follow the boardwalk to the right and you will come to the Marine Terrace Trail.

Common flowers along the Bluff and Marine Terrace Trails



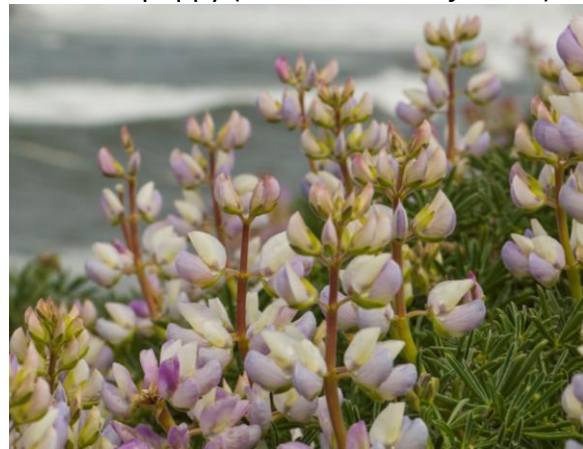
Seaside daisy (*Erigeron glaucus*)



California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*)



Sea pinks (*Armeria maritima*)



Coastal bush lupine (*Lupinus arboreus*)



Ocean bluff milk vetch (*Astragalus nuttallii*)



Sun cup (*Taraxia ovata*)