

About Ron Horii, Volunteer Park Photographer

I have been taking pictures nearly all my life. In high school, I took several classes in photography. At home, I developed film and made enlargements in my own darkroom. When I was in college, I spent a summer assisting my uncle, a commercial photographer in Detroit and learned the tricks of professionals. When my kids were younger, I took lots of pictures of them as they grew up. Later, as I started doing more hiking and biking for exercise, I began to discover and explore local parks and trails. While out on the trails, I brought my camera along to take pictures of the scenery along the way. I published my pictures on the Internet and became a volunteer photographer, contributing pictures to a number of different organizations, which have used my pictures in publications and webpages. Since I live closest to Santa Teresa County Park I have many pictures from that park. I also frequently visit other parks and trails in the area, particularly Almaden Quicksilver, Almaden Lake, Vasona Lake, the Coyote Creek Trail, the Los Alamitos Creek Trail, and the Los Gatos Creek Trail. In the summer, I often go bike riding around the Bay, so I've made guided photo tour webpages for the San Francisco Bay Trail Project.



You can see more of my pictures on the following websites:

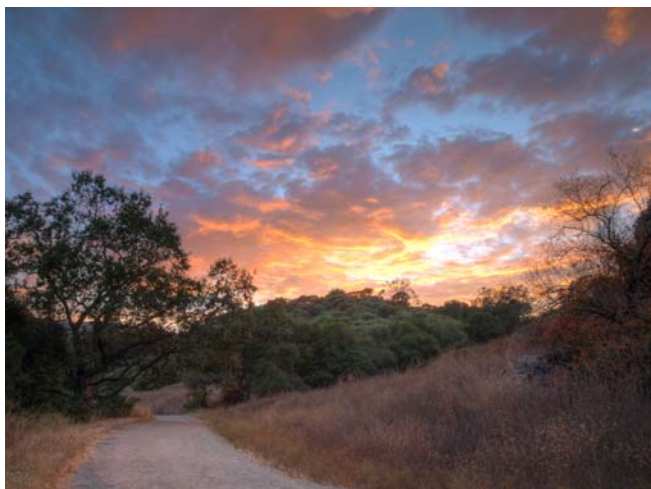
- San Francisco Bay Area Recreation and Travel, my personal website:
www.rhorii.com
- The Friends of Santa Teresa Park (I'm the secretary):
www.stpfriends.org
- The New Almaden Quicksilver County Park Association (I'm the webmaster):
www.newalmaden.org

I'm also a docent for the Santa Clara County Parks. Besides taking pictures for them, I also teach classes in outdoor photography. My next class is on Oct. 1, 2011 at 10:00 am at the Bernal Ranch in Santa Teresa County Park. See the flyer.

You can e-mail me at rhori@prodigy.net.

About the Pictures

My purpose for showing these pictures is to share what I've discovered: the natural beauty that surrounds us in our local parks, trails, and preserves. Most of these places are less than half an hour's drive from this library, some within walking distance. Santa Teresa County Park is only 7 blocks away from here. We are lucky in the Bay Area to be so close to such vast areas of parks and wild open space. My hope is that by looking at these pictures, you get encouraged to go outdoors and explore these places on your own.



About High-Dynamic Range Imaging

Many of these pictures were taken using a technique called "High Dynamic Range Imaging," or HDR, which addresses an age-old limitation of photography: dynamic range. The range of brightness found in nature, particularly in sunlit scenes, is much wider than can be captured accurately by film or digital camera

sensors. Print and even computer monitors are even more limited. Often, brightly-lit parts of the scene become overexposed, while darker parts in shadow tend to become underexposed, with detail lost in both. Film photographers use special camera filters or darkroom techniques to get around this, but with limitations. Professional photographers use special equipment, such as fill-in flash, reflectors, and diffusers to soften the extremes of lighting, but that only works for certain types of pictures, usually close-ups. Most of the time, photographers avoid scenes with high dynamic range or accept the results, as in silhouettes. However, using modern digital techniques, it's possible with software to compress extremes of light and dark so they can be viewed properly. These pictures were a combination of multiple photographs, each taken of the same scene, but with a different exposure setting, exposing for the highlights and the shadows. They were then combined with Photomatix, a popular program for creating HDR pictures. The technique works well for scenery, but does not work well if there are moving objects in the scene, such as people or animals. It has the most dramatic effect when used for sunrises, sunsets, and partly-cloudy landscapes.



About Almaden Quicksilver County Park

Almaden Quicksilver County Park sits on the southern edge of the Silicon Valley, with millions of people and thousands of businesses and industries spreading out below it to the north. It occupies most of the Los Capitancillos Ridge, running southeast from the Guadalupe Landfill to Almaden Reservoir. To

the north are the upscale suburbs of the Almaden Valley. To the southeast is the historic mining town of New Almaden. To the southwest is the soaring forested wall of the Sierra Azuls, topped by Mt. Umunhum. The park takes up 4157 acres of steep hillsides, cool forests, open meadows, and deep valleys. It borders two long reservoirs and contains several small ponds. It is crisscrossed by trails, including 34.2 miles for hiking, 23 miles for equestrians, and 10 miles for bicycling. The park is mostly undeveloped, but its history includes intense mercury mining operations that date back to the Gold Rush Era. The mercury mined from here was used in gold and silver mines in the Sierras to extract the precious metals from the ore. The hills here are honeycombed with tunnels that run for thousands of feet, some below sea level. All mining has ceased, and most of the tunnels have been sealed up. However, remnants of the park's mining history can be seen scattered throughout the. The vast majority of the park, though, is undeveloped wildland, filled with wildlife and covered with trees, grasses, and beautiful spring wildflowers.

You can learn about the park's rich history in the Almaden Quicksilver Mining Museum in New Almaden. It is housed in the historic Casa Grande, which was the once the residence and office for the mine managers. The museum has displays on quicksilver mining, as well as several rooms decorated with 19th century antique furnishings, artwork, and artifacts.





About Santa Teresa County Park

These pictures to the left are of Santa Teresa County Park. It is a huge area of undeveloped open space, literally in the backyards of thousands of residents of urban San Jose. It occupies 1627 acres in the southern part of the Santa Teresa Hills between South San Jose, the Almaden Valley, and the Coyote Valley. Its main entrance is on Bernal Road by the Santa Teresa

Golf Club, at 400 feet elevation. Its highest point is Coyote Peak, at 1155 feet, which is topped by a large antenna and has panoramic views that extend from San Francisco to Gilroy. Developed facilities in the park include the Pueblo Picnic Area, Santa Teresa Golf Club, an archery range, and the Santa Teresa Historic Area. In the winter, the park has frog ponds, rushing creeks, and waterfalls. In the spring, its rocky, serpentine hills are covered with wildflowers. Hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding are popular activities on its 18 miles of trails. Trails run throughout the park, from the Almaden Valley to the hilltops to the Santa Teresa area.

Santa Teresa Park is rich in history. It includes lands that were part of 10,000-acre Rancho Santa Teresa, founded by Jose Joaquin Bernal in 1826. The Santa Teresa Historic Area is along Manila Drive and Curie Drive. It consists of the Bernal-Gulnac-Joice Ranch and Santa Teresa Spring, which have been developed into interpretive areas. The ranch house has period furniture and household items that recall its roll as a turn-of-the-century farm house. The barn has a timeline showing the ranch's historic and includes historic artifacts. Santa Teresa Spring is an ever-flowing spring that fills a pond. The pond, while used for irrigation, was also the first swimming pool built in Santa Clara County. A viewing platform allows close-up views of the pond and spring. Interpretive signs tell of the ranch's history. Master planning for the remaining part of the area, which includes the Bear Tree Lot, Pyzak Ranch, and Bonetti Ranch at Curie and San Ignacio, is on-going.





About the Santa Clara County Parks

The Santa Clara County Parks system consists of 28 parks covering 47,000 total acres in Santa Clara County. The parks range in size from 4-acre Chitactac-Adams to 9560-acre Joseph D. Grant. Some parks, like Vasona Lake and Hellyer, are surrounded by urban areas and have developed facilities, such as lawns, playgrounds, and paved picnic areas. Others, like Uvas Canyon, Sanborn, Grant, Mt. Madonna, and Upper Stevens Creek, are more remote and wild. Parks like Santa Teresa, Almaden Quicksilver, Rancho San Antonio, and Ed Levin are wildland parks that are adjacent to urban areas, providing city dwellers a quick escape into nature. Many of the parks, such

as Alviso Marina, Rancho San Antonio, Ed Levin, and Calero, adjoin large areas of open space run by other agencies, with trails connecting them. Two long paved multi-use regional trails, the Los Gatos Creek and Coyote Creek Trails, run through County Parkland, as well as through other cities. Most of the parks are nature preserves, with habitats for rare and endangered plants and animals. Ten parks have historic structures. Five parks have campgrounds. Sixteen parks have lakes or creeks that are open to fishing. Some are stocked with trout. Five parks allow boating, four of which allow power boats. Motorcycle County Park has trails for dirt bikes. Field Sports has ranges for



shooting sports. Three parks have archery ranges. Two parks have golf courses. Rangers, park interpreters, and docent volunteer lead outdoor programs in the parks that provide a wide variety of recreational and educational activities. The parks often host major events, such as races, kid fishing days, and charitable fundraisers. They are popular places to hold private events, such as group picnics and weddings.

About the Baylands

We are here at the south end of the San Francisco Bay Area, an area whose chief geographical feature is the Bay itself. San Jose has a port on the Bay at Alviso. Milpitas, Santa Clara, Sunnyvale, Mountain View, and Palo Alto are other cities in Santa Clara County whose borders touch the Bay or ponds or sloughs along it. Much of the South Bay was turned into salt ponds in the early part of the 20th century. In 2003, 15,100 acres were purchased from Cargill, owner of the salt ponds, to be restored to tidal wetlands. This will provide improved habitats for plants and animals and increased public access.



Public access to the Bay is provided by parks and trails along it. The San Francisco Bay Trail in Santa Clara County begins in Alviso, with developed facilities at Alviso Marina County Park and salt pond trails at the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Two loop trails run for 9 miles and 5.5 miles around the salt ponds. The Bay Trail runs past the entrance to Santa Clara's 4-mile long San Tomas Aquino Creek Trail, which runs south to Monroe Street. The Bay Trail



then enters the Sunnyvale Baylands, which has developed Sunnyvale Baylands Park and dirt trails along the salt ponds and water treatment ponds. A new trail segment runs past Moffett Field to Stevens Creek. Mountain View has the Stevens Creek Trail and Shoreline at Mountain View Park. Palo Alto has the Palo Alto Baylands, which connects to Ravenswood Open Space Preserve in East Palo Alto.



About Open Space Preserves

There are two public agencies in Santa Clara County dedicated to preserving open space, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District and the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority. Their purpose is to preserve and protect undeveloped land. They differ from the Santa Clara County Parks in that their mission is not primarily dedicated to recreation, but most their lands are open to light-impact public access, such as

nature study, hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding.

Midpen is the larger and older of the two agencies, created by voters in 1972. It preserves land along the Peninsula in southern San Mateo County, the northwestern part of Santa Clara County, and a small portion of Santa Cruz County. The District covers 550 square miles and has 26 open space preserves, protecting 60,000 acres. Their largest preserve is in Santa Clara County, Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve. It covers 18,446 acres along the southern ridge of the Santa Cruz Mountains, including Mt. Umunhum. It has 24.4 miles of trails. The Bay Area Ridge Trail runs through it, connecting Lexington County Park with Almaden Quicksilver County Park.



The SCCOSA was created by the state legislature in 1992. It protects areas in Santa Clara County outside of Midpen's boundaries and the city of Gilroy. The main preserves that are open to the public are Rancho Canada Del Oro, which is next to Calero County Park south of the Almaden Valley, and Sierra Vista, which is above Alum Rock Park in East San Jose. It has a number of preserves, such as the Blair Ranch, Doan Ranch, and Palassou Ridge, that are not yet open to the public, but can be visited on guided tours. The SCCOSA also earmarks 20% of its capital funds for city projects. They helped build local urban trails, such as the Albertson Parkway, and helped purchase the Pyzak Ranch in Santa Teresa Park, next to Bernal School. They manage lands owned by other agencies, such as Coyote Ridge, owned by the Valley Transportation Agency. Coyote Ridge has some of the best wildflowers in the Bay Area and protects rare and endangered species, such as the bay checkerspot butterfly.



About San Jose City Parks

The City of San Jose has an extensive network of parks and trails. The parks range from tiny neighborhood tot lots to large regional parks. Most of the neighborhood parks are developed facilities, with lawns, playgrounds, playing fields, and picnic areas. The regional parks include Alum Rock, Almaden Lake, Guadalupe River Park,

and Lake Cunningham. Kelley Park has the Japanese Friendship Gardens, History Park, and Happy Hollow Park & Zoo. The city's trail system includes over 53 miles of trails, with a goal of 100 miles. Major trails include the Guadalupe Creek/River Trail, the Los Alamitos/Calero Creek, and the Silver Creek Trails. The city also has portions of the Coyote Creek, Penitencia Creek, and Los Gatos Creek Trails.



Many parks have historical significance. 20-acre Edenvale Gardens Park is on the site of the Frontier Village Amusement Park, which operated from 1960-1980 on land that was originally part of the Hayes estate. The 62-room 41,000 square foot Hayes Mansion is located next to the park. It was the home of the Hayes family. It was built in 1899 to 1904 and is now a resort and conference center.

60-acre Montgomery Hill Park is located next to Evergreen Valley College. It has interpretive signs on the hills that memorialize John Montgomery, considered the father of gliding. Montgomery was an instructor at what is now Santa Clara University. In 1911, he built a glider and launched it from these hills.

Some parks are memorials. Fontana Park in the Almaden Valley memorializes San Jose Officer Jeffrey Fontana, who was killed in the line of duty in 2001. The Albertson Parkway, near Santa Teresa County Park, is a memorial to Gary Albertson, who was a community leader that advocated improved safety on "Blood Alley," the deadly section of Monterey Highway between Morgan Hill and San Jose. Ironically, he and his family were killed in a car accident on that road, but his advocacy led to the construction of the Highway 101 freeway bypass.