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GOLDEN GATE TRAILBLAZER...

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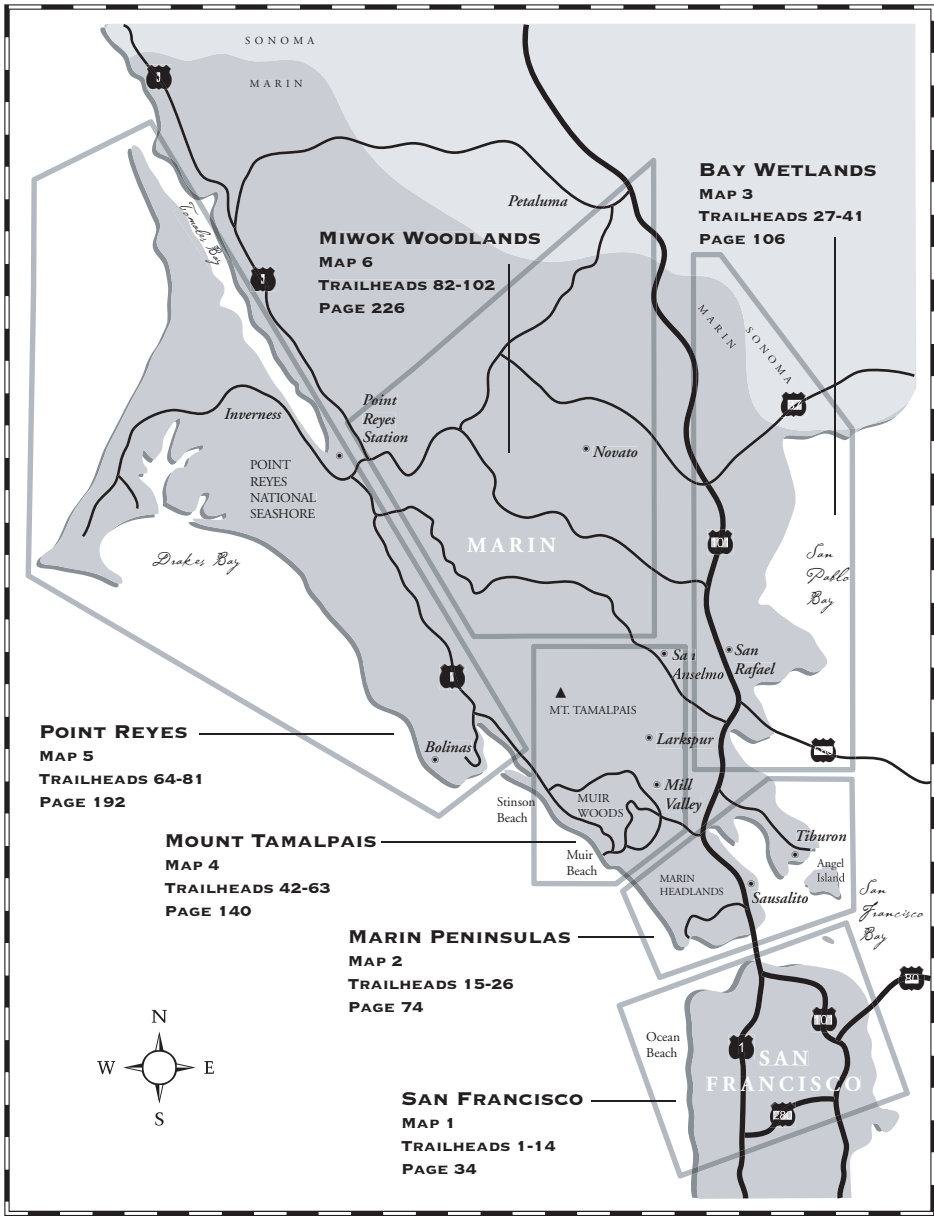
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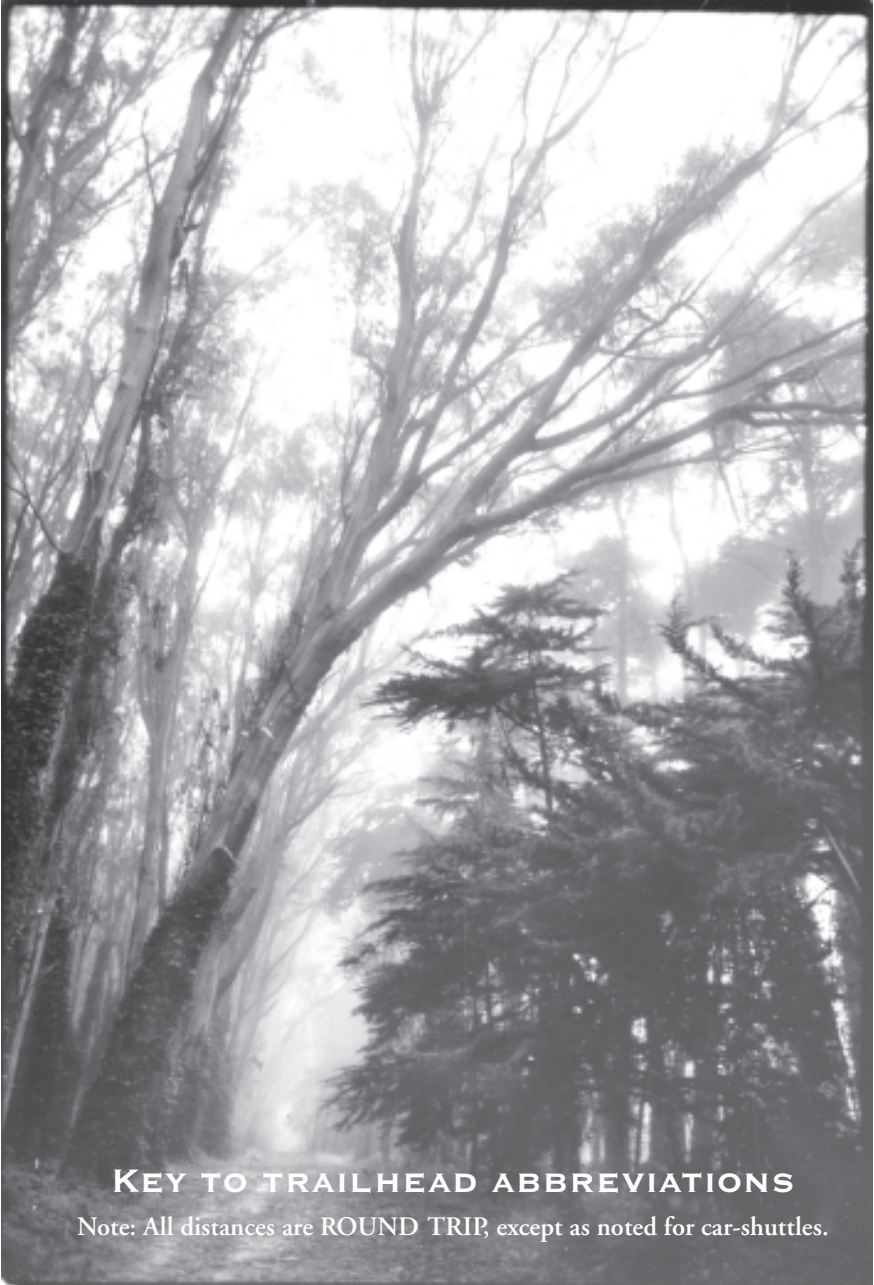
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MASTER MAP



KEY TO TRAILHEAD ABBREVIATIONS

Note: All distances are ROUND TRIP, except as noted for car-shuttles.

H = DAY HIKING

ST = TOWN STROLLS

J = JOGGING

MB = MOUNTAIN & ROAD BIKING

R = ROLL: SKATES, SCOOTERS,

BABY STROLLERS, WHEELCHAIRS

76. POINT REYES BEACHES

H, J

Best for: Miles of sand and big waves, beachcombers' beaches with piles of driftwood and junk treasures washed ashore.

Parking: From Hwy. 1 between Pt. Reyes Station and Olema, turn west on Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Continue through Inverness and veer left toward lighthouse, past Pierce Point Rd. Continue on Drake Blvd. *For North Beach:* Turn right about 4.5 mi. past Pierce Point Rd., just after G Ranch. *For South Beach:* Turn right about 2.5 miles past North Beach, past E Ranch.

Agency: Point Reyes National Seashore

H: North Beach to: **Abbotts Lagoon** (5.5 mi.), or **Point Reyes Beach walk** (3.5 mi.); **South Beach to Point Reyes cliffs** (6.25 mi.)

Along the western face of the Point Reyes Peninsula is some 11 miles of beach, stretching straight as a string between the 600-foot cliffs of Point Reyes on the south to Elephant Rock of McClures Beach to the north. The wide margin of sand takes a pounding from high surf and prevailing winds. Bordering the inland are sea-grass dunes and coastal hillocks that in turn give way to the pasturelands of the north peninsula's historic dairy ranches. If you're seeking a solitary beach experience, these vast beaches are a sure thing.

From **North Beach to Abbotts Lagoon**, head to the right as you face the water. After about .75-mile, on the bluffs is the AT&T Radio Station, looking like a techno-art installation, which has received airwaves since 1931 from faraway locales. After almost 3 miles, you'll have to climb the sand dunes of Great Beach to see Abbotts Lagoon, set just offshore between beach bluffs and hills. Going the other way from North Beach, left as you face the water, you'll reach the parking lot at South Beach after about 1.5 miles. The area between the two parking lots is called **Point Reyes Beach**.

From **South Beach to Point Reyes cliffs**, head left as you face the water. You should be able to see the Coast Guard light flashing some 300 feet above the water at the tip of the point. This beach walk is a classic example of dunes giving way to big cliffs. How close you get to the rock wall will depend on surf and tides. *Be Aware:* Point Reyes beaches are notoriously treacherous swimming beaches, due to high surf, wave-borne debris, riptides, and, for a special bonus, the presence of great white sharks. The most-common hazard, however, are rogue waves that can snatch a hiker from the shore.

J: Sloping sand makes for tough sledding, so time it for low-tide. These long stretches of sand will run the legs out from under even the most-ardent among joggers.

77. ABBOTTS LAGOON

H, R

Best for: Migratory waterfowl and shorebirds flourish around these two large lakes, set so close to the ocean that surf spray rises above the sand dunes at their western shore.

Parking: From Hwy. 1 between Pt. Reyes Station and Olema, turn west on Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Continue through Inverness and veer right on Pierce Point Rd. Continue 3 mi. to trailhead parking on left.

Agency: Point Reyes National Seashore

H: Hunter Browbach Bench-North Wing view (.75-mi.); Lagoon Bluff (2.75 mi.); Abbotts Lagoon-Great Beach (3 mi.)

Except after heavy storms, when the dunes open and salt water mixes with fresh run-off, Abbotts Lagoon is comprised of two large lakes, the biggest nearly a mile long, that are joined together by a short stream. Between the North Wing of the lagoon, which can be seen from trailhead parking, and the South Wing, which is the larger, is a low-lying bluff. Grebes, terns, black-shouldered kites, ducks, several kinds of raptors, and the endangered snowy plover are some of the winged creatures to be seen soaring about or bobbing on the water.

For all hikes, start down the hard-packed, unpaved path from the parking area. After a little more than .25-mile, you'll get to the **Browbach Bench**, set among the cattails. After the bench, the going becomes sandy, as the trail curves left toward the bluff. After a mile you reach the footbridge that crosses the stream that joins the lagoon's two wings. For the **Lagoon Bluff**, go left at the bridge on a trail that winds about 200 feet up to the top of the bluff. You'll be surprised at the size of South Wing, upon first sight.

For **Abbotts Lagoon and Great Beach**, continue straight across the footbridge, as the broad waters of South Wing come into view. With typical onshore wind gusts, you may get sand blasted as you walk the .5-mile west along the shore. You cross a huge dune to the beach. The margins of the lagoon blush with wildflowers in the spring-time. *Be Aware:* Plovers and other birds nest in the dune grasses during the spring and early summer; watch where you step.

R: Wheelchairs and Strollers: The first part of the Lagoon Trail, to Hunter Browbach Bench, is packed hard to accommodate visitors sitting on wheels. Even going this short distance affords a good look at the wildlife and ecology of the North Wing of Abbotts Lagoon.

78. KEHOE BEACH

H, J

Best for: A family beach with many facets—big dunes, a marsh trail, and waves that duel with cliffs and rocky islands.

Parking: From Hwy. 1 between Pt. Reyes Station and Olema, turn west on Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Continue through Inverness and veer right on Pierce Point Rd. Continue some 5 mi. to trailhead parking on left, about 2 mi. beyond Abbotts Lagoon.

Agency: Point Reyes National Seashore

H: Kehoe Marsh to Beach (1.25 mi.); Kehoe Beach Walks (2.75 mi. to 5.75 mi.)

The trail from roadside parking goes along a stream through **Kehoe Marsh**, reaching the beach dunes at a small lagoon. Keep your eyes peeled for birds flitting about, and for rabbits and bobcats, uneasy bedfellows who may venture down to the fresh water from the coastal scrub hillsides. Cresting the beach dune, you can go right on **Kehoe Beach** toward Elephant Rock, the landmark offshore of McClures Beach. But high surf, rocks, and an intervening point usually will prevent you from going much farther than .75-mile in that direction. *Be Aware:* Swimming is dangerous here.

Going left, or south, on Kehoe Beach you can walk all day. One worthy destination is the Great Beach at Abbotts Lagoon, TH77, which is about 2.25 miles away. Set your sights on the major hill rising out of the dunes that you can see from the beginning of the hike. Southern Kehoe is a deep beach, with a high-water mark scattered with driftwood, boat parts, and possibly anything else that floats. After passing Abbotts Lagoon, the next trail inland is another 2 miles, at North Beach. *Note:* Campfires are allowed by permit on Kehoe, adding atmosphere to a family picnic on blustery days.

J: With the marsh, the dunes, and different kinds of beach runs north and south, Kehoe Beach is a good choice for off-road runners—especially those who want to bring the dog along.



Kehoe Beach

79. TOMALES POINT

H, ST, J

Best for: A narrow, pastoral peninsula separating the bay from the ocean—roamed by elk and carpeted with flowers—that ends at a wild seascape; or a big beach walled in by cliffs that greet monster waves.

Parking: From Hwy. 1 between Pt. Reyes Station and Olema, turn west on Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Continue through Inverness and veer right on Pierce Point Rd. Continue about 8 mi. to road's end, about 3 mi. beyond Kehoe Beach.

Agency: Point Reyes National Seashore

H: **Tomales Point Trail to: Tule Elk Range (2.25 mi.), or Tomales Bluff (9.5 mi.); McClures Beach (1.25 mi.); Elephant Rock (2 mi.)**

Tomales Point is the peninsula's northernmost finger of land, ever-narrowing and descending toward sea level. You start out on grasslands about 1.5 miles across and 400-foot high, and wind up at Tomales Bluff, a pointed land's end that is just above the surf spray. To the west is the Pacific and to the east is Tomales Bay, with the San Andreas Fault running under its shallow, 12-mile long waters—separating two continental plates. If an earthquake like the '06 happens when you're on the bluff, then the Pacific plate upon which you stand will become the prow of a tectonic ship, motoring forward perhaps 20 feet up the shoreline.

For the **Tomales Point Trail** hikes, start out just to the left of white-washed Pierce Point Ranch, contouring left around the highest hills of the point. At the outset, views of Driftwood Beach will be down to your left. The trail then descends into Windy Gap, a deep crease in the peninsula hosting a cypress grove. Heading inland at the gap, White Gulch leads to an inlet on the bay, where offshore you'll see little Hog Island. All around this area is the **Tule Elk Range**—supporting a healthy herd of these large animals, thousands of whom once roamed Point Reyes.

The trail winds up from Windy Gap, and then descends again for another 2-plus miles to **Tomales Bluff**. This northern tip is where you'll find some of the 860 species of wildflowers that grow in the park. One sandy portion of the trail goes through a field of lupine, bushlike and over knee-high. Offshore of the Pacific side, about .75-mile from trail's end, is guano-hued Bird Rock. Overhead, keep an eye out, mostly during fall and winter, for owls, peregrine falcons, and hawks. At Tomales Bluff, the trail drops down to sandstone perches, and you're most likely to see pelicans and other shorebirds. In the frothing, clear water you may spot a harbor seal or sea lion. Offshore, in the winter and spring, look for spouting whales.