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Orange County: Crystal Cove State Park to open 60-site campground



The beach and some of the cottages at Crystal Cove State Park in Laguna Beach. (Christine Cotter / Los Angeles Times)

By Mary Forgione
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June 29, 2011 | 5:00 a.m.

A new \$15-million coastal campground will open Friday at [Crystal Cove State Park](#) in [Orange County](#), but don't get your hopes up for a stay over the Fourth of July. Sites quickly sold out for the inaugural weekend of the year-round campground. Consolation prize: You can tour the site for free Thursday.

The Moro Campground, while not directly on the beach, offers 60 hilltop campsites facing the ocean. Some, with electrical hookups, go for \$65 a night; others, for tents and soft-sided trailers, are \$50 a night. Visitors access the beach through a tunnel under Pacific Coast Highway. The park also has added 200 day-use spots that cost \$15 each.

The campground is built on the site of the former [El Morro Trailer Village](#), whose residents were evicted after a bitter, high-profile campaign several years ago to remain in their homes. Now the area has been landscaped with 18,000 native plants, which have really taken hold after the wet winter, said to Supt. Todd Lewis.

So how could a new campground open at a time when budget cuts threaten to shut scores of [state parks](#)?

"The campground has been in the works for many years, well in advance of the fiscal crisis," Lewis said. He added that the campground and day-use area should pay for themselves if they become popular destinations like the highly sought-after historic beach cottages at the park.

Crystal Cove brings in about \$1 million to \$1.5 million in camping and parking fees annually, Lewis said, and receives a percentage of a concessionaire's income from renting out the cottages and other services.

The public can tour the new campground at an open house from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday. It joins 13 [vintage beach cottages](#) in the Crystal Cove Historic District (two more are set to open this summer, Lewis said) and 32 [primitive back-country campsites](#) that are reached by a hike of three or four miles.

Crystal Cove sits on nearly 3,000 acres of unincorporated county land near Laguna Beach and parts of Newport Beach.

Contact: [Crystal Cove State Park](#), 8471 North Coast Highway, (949) 494-3539; for reservations go to [ReserveAmerica](#) or call (800) 444-7275.