Self trip into the field – [Malibu Creek State Park](http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=614)

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Malibu Creek State Park is one of Southern California’s many excellent examples of the Chaparral Biome for which we are famous.

Information:

* The park is located four miles south of Highway 101 on Las Virgenes/Malibu Canyon Road. Signs for the park are well marked and there is an easy turn off into the park.
* Parking is $12.00 per vehicle.
* Park in the lower lot as close to the bathroom and begin where the sign reads “backcountry trails.”
* The nature center is open from 12 – 4 on Saturday and Sunday. The best hours to view wildlife are the first 3 hours after sunrise.
* Bring water and sunscreen, and of course your hiking shoes.
* Dangers: Poison oak and rattlesnakes both call the park home, but sunburns, dehydration and twisted ankles are the most common accidents.

Objective:

Walk a few miles in the park observing, recording and explaining adaptations that flora and fauna have that allow them to thrive in what appears to be a difficult environment.

Tasks:

Bring along a digital camera to record specific examples and then create a presentation (either PowerPoint or web based) that explains the significance of some of the adaptations made by organisms in a Chaparral Biome.

1. Walk toward down the steps toward the “backcountry trails”. As you walk you should notice that you are walking almost due west, so south is on your left. Keep track of which way you are facing, the difference between the northern aspect (side of the hill that faces north) and the southern aspect is dramatic.
2. Going down the steps you pass under a scrub oak. Look at the leaves and list three characteristics that help it thrive.
3. Continue walking toward the water crossing, just before reaching the crossing you will find a valley oak on the left and a coast live oak on the right. The coast live oak is an evergreen, while the valley oak is deciduous. Explain the advantages and disadvantages of being evergreen or deciduous.
4. Walk to the river crossing. What trees do you find here and nowhere else? What adaptation has allowed these arroyo willows to thrive? This is best seen in May and June.
5. Walk up the hill and continue on. Look both North and South. What is the difference between the two aspects?
6. Follow the road that crosses the stream, assuming it is passable, water flow varies greatly with the seasons. There are really only two seasons in a Chaparral biome, rainy and dry. Follow the trail leading West toward the nature center running parallel to the creek. Observe plants growing in the meadow. What are some of their adaptations?
7. As you approach the nature center you will notice large western sycamore trees. These are deciduous trees. How have they adapted to this difficult environment. Hint: look where these trees are located.
8. If the nature center is open, go inside and check out the animal specimens. Photograph two and list some adaptations for each that allow them to thrive.

If you have time remaining, there are a lot of other interesting things to view in the park. Just west of the nature center on the north side of the creek is a popular climbing rock face and a small gorge carved in the rock. There is a small lake/pond further west but you have to walk around the hill. The TV show M\*A\*S\*H was filmed still further back in the park. Much of the hiking follows the creek, which keeps the temperature manageable.