

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

THE LOST COAST TRAIL

Best Season

MAY – OCT

Duration

2 – 4 DAYS

Difficulty

MODERATE-HARD

Full Trail

~25 MILES

The Lost Coast exists because the mountains got in the way. When engineers were routing Highway 1 north in the 1930s, the King Range was too steep and too remote to build through. They went inland. What remained was roughly 60 miles of shoreline with no paved access, no cell service, and no development. The trail runs through all of it.

WHAT MAKES IT UNIQUE



TIDE-DEPENDENT SECTIONS

Parts of the trail are only passable at low tide. Your schedule runs around the tides. NOAA charts are required planning material, not optional reading.



WILDLIFE ON THE SHORELINE

Harbor seals, sea lions, and seabirds are consistent sightings. Whale sightings happen during migration. The coast is remote enough that animals use it as habitat.



NO CELL SERVICE

No coverage for most of the route. Print tide charts before you leave. Offline maps are not optional. Every decision out there is yours to make without looking anything up.



MOUNTAINS MEET THE OCEAN

The King Range rises steeply from the shoreline, which is why no road was ever built here. You hike where the terrain drops directly into the Pacific.

WHAT TO EXPECT ON THE TRAIL

SOFT SAND

More demanding per mile than compacted trail. Budget more time.

ROCKY SHORE

Uneven footing. Move slowly on tidal shelf sections.

CREEK CROSSINGS

Several along the route. Depth varies by season.

FOG & WIND

Common even in summer. Layer regardless of the forecast.

STEEP BLUFFS

Coastal cliffs define the inland edge in several sections.

SHIFTING CONDITIONS

Fog, wind, and sun can all appear within a few hours.

PLANNING YOUR TRIP

Things that require your attention before you leave the trailhead.

PERMITS

- Required for all overnight trips
- Book via Recreation.gov in advance
- Limited availability May through September
- Day hikers do not need a permit

TIDE PLANNING

CRITICAL

- Check NOAA tide charts before leaving. Download offline. No cell service on trail
- Plan your daily schedule around safe crossing windows
- Sections that look passable on a map can be underwater at high tide
- Always build buffer time at tide-dependent sections

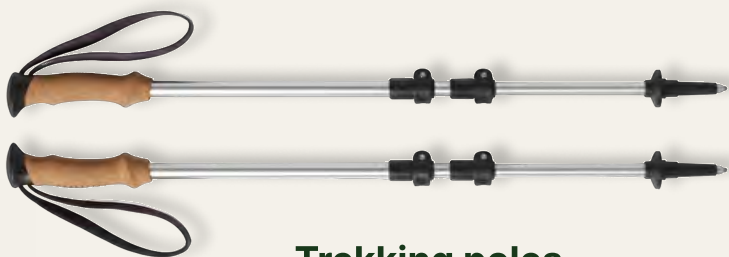
SHUTTLE LOGISTICS

- Most hikers do this trail point-to-point
- Option A: Arrange a shuttle service. Book in advance during peak season
- Option B: Coordinate two vehicles, one at each trailhead
- Arrange logistics before you arrive

WHAT TO BRING



Backpacking tent



Trekking poles



Extra food



Rain jacket



Sleeping bag



Stove + fuel



Water filter



Navigation tools



First aid kit



Waterproof footwear

PRO TIPS



START EARLY EVERY DAY

Tides set your schedule. Early starts give you margin when conditions shift unexpectedly mid-day.



PACK LIGHTER THAN YOU THINK

Sand walking amplifies every pound. Cut weight wherever you can without cutting safety margins.



TREKKING POLES ARE NOT OPTIONAL

Rocky tidal shelf and soft sand both demand them. Stability and reduced fatigue across 25 miles.



ALWAYS HAVE A BACKUP PLAN

Know your retreat option before committing to each section. Conditions can change mid-route.

NOT READY FOR THE FULL TRAIL?

DAY HIKE FROM TRAILHEADS

Both Mattole (north) and Black Sands Beach (south) give immediate access to the most dramatic sections with no overnight permit required.

OUT-AND-BACK SECTIONS

3 to 6 miles from either end. Coastal terrain without the tide-planning complexity of mid-trail sections.

SCENIC VIEWPOINTS

Overlooks near both trailheads give sightlines to the coastline without descending to beach level. Worth the drive.