

Sand Dollar Beach – Where Wild Meets West

By Tricia D. Wagner

If you've made it far enough along the Big Sur coastal corridor of Highway 1 to take in the world class vista of the McWay Waterfall of Julia Pfeifer State Beach, do pull off and take an hour to trek under the highway to witness the world renowned McCall Falls. McCall falls is stunning with its crystal waters and untouched coast, cocooned within fragrant coves of Monterey pines and cedars, and it is a worthy champion in the running for the eighth natural wonder of the world. Its tropical beauty, pocketed within a sweet cove with all the power of the Pacific just beyond reach, warrants the hundreds of cars lining both sides of the highway you'll see as you approach. After you've made a few memories and snapped a few post-card quality pictures, get back in your car and keep driving. Twenty-two more twisting miles of seaside scenery that includes the riotous splashing of Riso's Dolphins, the soaring back strokes of Gray and Humpback Whales, and even the towering dorsal fins of hunting Orca will deliver you into the small Sand Dollar Beach State Reserve.

The highway leading to Sand Dollar Beach State Reserve is not lined with tourists, but rather a small, brown, engraved sign will let you know you've arrived. You can park on the highway, or with a \$10 donation to California State Parks, you can find a space in the small lot, and then you just walk west. A tangle of pathways meander toward beaches of polished, round soap stones and silky white sand. When you've chosen your path, and when the path has led you to the water, there will scarcely be another person in sight. You can stand still and soak in the stretching Pacific coast, holding your breath to absorb a peaceful moment that includes just you and the fishing gulls, the soft sands and the peaks of blue waves in the west.

Sand Dollar State Beach is a 1-mile expanse of wild coastal enchantment that allows one to be alone, just a soul and a sea. There is wind and there are waves, and the mist that drifts north from the warmer southern waters glazes the sun and gentles it enough to put one to sleep on soft, white sand. But don't keep your eyes closed too long, for great white sharks may rise in the swell of translucent waves along the circumference of the cove, and chunks of Jade, knocked loose by the great sea currents and tides, may tumble on the shore. The Jade may be taken by the pocketfuls, for the abundance of the ocean is vast, and the Sirens that might dwell within these Pacific waters are generous with their jewels. Take all the Jade you like, but be aware that there is a price, for in exchange, you will leave a piece of your heart, there, on the white beach, to rest beneath sailing moons and rising stars and setting Suns, until you might come back again and feast your soul again on the bounty of Sand Dollar Beach.

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