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## **FROM DEPP TO DEMILLE, NATURE STARS AT GUADALUPE DUNES**

### **Not Even Hollywood Can Resist the Breathtaking Allure of The Towering Dunes on California's Central Coast**

SANTA MARIA, CA—When Johnny Depp and his pirates recently invaded the Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve in the Santa Maria Valley, they walked in the footsteps of pharaohs. Indeed, from the third installment of Disney's "Pirates of The Caribbean" to Cecil B. DeMille's 1923 silent epic "The Ten Commandments," the towering dunes on California's Central Coast have proved irresistible to the silver screen and everyday visitors alike.

The Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve, which is open to the public, lies west of Santa Maria in Santa Barbara County, approximately 150 miles north of Los Angeles and 250 miles south of San Francisco.

The crew from *Pirates of The Caribbean*, including star Johnny Depp, filmed at the dunes in October. Other films that have used the dunes as a dramatic backdrop include "The Son of the Sheik," starring Rudolph Valentino; "Morocco," starring Gary Cooper and Marlene Dietrich; and "The Last Outpost," starring Cary Grant. Recent films that have shot at the dunes include 2004's "Hidalgo" and 1997's "G.I. Jane."

The preserve belongs to the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes Complex, which spans 18 miles of shoreline with 1,400 individual species of flora and fauna, as well as numerous lagoons and lakes. Here, the awe-inspiring mountains of shifting sand comprise the largest of only two coastal dunes complexes in California. They also represent the highest beach dunes in the western United States.

Visitors to the dunes are encouraged to begin their journey at the Dunes Center in the small town of Guadalupe along scenic Highway 1. Exhibits at the Dunes Center include a displays on the extraordinary biodiversity of the dunes; recovered artifacts from DeMille's *City of the Pharaoh*; and a short film on the history of the "Dunites"—an "eclectic group of freethinkers, artists, poets and mystics" who inhabited the dunes from the early 1900s to 1973.

The three most popular dunes destinations are all easily accessible from the Dunes Center. Visitors wishing to drive straight to the oceanfront can take Main Street west into the heart of the Guadalupe Dunes Preserve. Nearby Oso Flaco Lake Road leads to a convenient parking area, from where visitors can take a 30-minute stroll along a boardwalk through the dunes and to the beach. And those feeling even more adventurous can hike across the dunes into the heart of the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes National Wildlife Refuge.

Visitors can find a range of lodging in nearby Santa Maria, which offers a host of additional exciting experiences, from wine tasting to world-renowned barbecue to championship golf courses.

To request information about the dunes and the Santa Maria Valley, call the Santa Maria Valley Visitor & Convention Bureau toll-free at (800) 331-3779 or visit [www.santamaria.com](http://www.santamaria.com).

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