

Yelp-like website harnesses social media content for California parks

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A new mobile-friendly website has launched that blends social media, Internet databases and the mapping muscle of Apple and Google to explore California's vast web of local, state and federal parks.

It's like Yelp! for outdoor recreation statewide.

CaliParks.org, developed by San Francisco-based Stamen Design, gives users pictures and particulars about every park in California – 11,826 in all. Want to see what city parks are nearby? Find a public golf course? Reserve an oceanside campsite? Check when the Governor's Mansion is open? The new website helps with that and more.

The website's simple design uses content from Twitter and Foursquare to keep up with social media conversations about parks. Visitors' posts on Flickr and Instagram supply CaliParks ever-changing catalog of images from parks across the state.

The site's launch this week coincides with a report from the Parks Forward Commission that urges exploiting technology to reconnect Californians with parks. The independent commission, created after a Sacramento Bee investigation exposed fiscal mismanagement in the state's Parks Department, spearheaded the website's development.

Parks Forward spokesman Steve Maviglio said the site was created "with philanthropic funds," not public money.

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