



An American Tour: 72

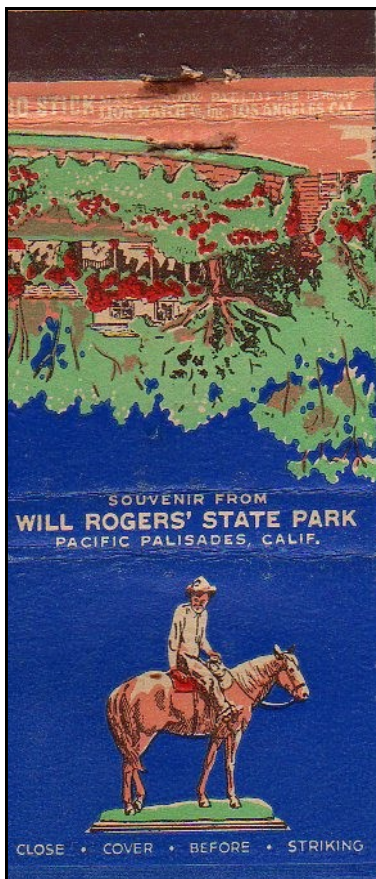


California's *Will Rogers' State Park*

In what is now the town of Pacific Palisades, Rogers built his ranch, where he lived with his wife Betty and their three children, Will Jr., Mary and James. The 31-room ranch house, which includes 11 baths and seven fireplaces, is surrounded by a stable, corrals, riding ring, roping arena, golf course, polo field - and riding and hiking trails that give visitors spectacular views of the ranch and the surrounding countryside - 186 acres. The ranch became a State Park in 1944 after the death of Mrs. Rogers, and the house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971.

California State Parks has completed a major renovation of the ranch house. The project included reconstruction of flagstone areas that surround the house, seismic safety work, replacement of electrical systems and installation of a new heating and air conditioning system. The house has reopened to the public as of March 2006.

Beyond the ranch and the stables are the trails that lead to spectacular views of the countryside around the park. Since Will Rogers State Historic Park is on the tip of the Santa Monica Mountains, the trails offer vistas of both the sea and the mountains. Visitors can hike to Inspiration Point, take the Rogers trail around the perimeter of the park or continue on into Topanga State Park via the Backbone Trail System.



The ranch reflects Will Rogers' roots in horsemanship, starting with the polo field, which is the first thing the visitor sees when looking south from the parking area. The field is the only outdoor polo field in Los Angeles County, and the only field that is regulation size. Featured in many movies and television shows including a stint as Golden Gate Park in *Star Trek IV*, the polo field features a gentle slope that forms an area for viewing the polo action. Up from the parking area are the ranch buildings, including the visitor center, which once was the ranch guest house. The visitor center features a film on the life of Will Rogers, literature and an audio tour of the grounds. The ranch buildings and grounds are maintained as they were when the Rogers family lived there in the late 1920s and 1930s. The living room of the main ranch house, with a collection of Native American rugs and baskets, features a porch swing in the center of the room and a mounted calf, which was given to Will Rogers to encourage him to rope the calf instead of his friends. The north wing of the house contains the family bedrooms, Rogers' study and the sunroom.

But the park is more than just a historic site, it's also a working ranch. The park still retains many of the western equestrian activities that were a part of Will Rogers' life. Up the hill from the main guest ranch, above the green expanse of lawn, are the stables, which have been renovated. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Will_Rogers_State_Historic_Park]

