

## Marina Skate Park reigns as the top skate destination in Monterey County.

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By Stuart Thornton



A skater holds a tail stall at the Monterey Skate Park.

As the setting sun sits on the horizon like a giant pumpkin, the Marina Skate Park buzzes with noisy activity. The clickety-clack of skateboards hitting the concrete sounds like dominos being slapped down on a table. The slide of wheels across the park evokes ice skaters gliding across a frozen pond. Meanwhile, the skaters cheer each other on like a ragtag sports team.

In the park's street skate section, middle school-aged boys hop into the air on their boards, flipping them underneath their feet like card dealers doing fancy card tricks. Nearby, in a deep bowl, skaters rocket up to the top of the deep depression, then are dragged back down by gravity's irresistible pull.

Before he drops into the nine-and-a-half-foot-deep bowl, 12-year-old Brian Hunt says he enjoys skating the Marina park more than the one in nearby Monterey. "There's really not much to do there," he says.

After Hunt exits the bowl, John Machado edges close to the lip of the concrete structure. Likely the only person in the park who has graduated from middle school, the 43-year-old Santa Cruz resident and a father of two young skaters likes to stop by the Marina Skate Park on the way to visit his girlfriend in Carmel.

Machado prefers Marina Skate Park's pool to its street skating section. "I'm not going to jump over anything," he says. "I gotta show up for work tomorrow."

While there are seven public skate parks scattered across Monterey County, Marina's park, which opened in 2004, tops most skaters' lists. Mike Oates-Kealey of Salinas skate store Bill's Wheels says that some of the county's skate parks – like Castroville's assemblage of semi-portable ramps slapped on an asphalt and Monterey's "kinda weird" design – can't compare to Marina's skater haven.

"The Marina park is one of my favorite skate parks I've ever skated," he says. "It has good flow."

The park was designed by Wormhoudt Incorporated, a Santa Cruz-based skate park design firm that created the nation's largest skate park in Louisville. The company has also made parks in far-flung locales including Oahu and Tel Aviv. Zach Wormhoudt, the company's owner, says

that before designing the Marina Skate Park he met with local skaters on several occasions.

“We were basically trying to give the local skating contingency what they wanted,” he says.

As a result, local skaters are treated to a deep bowl and a street section with a flat bank, ramps, rails, ledges and a fun box.

The Marina park’s popularity shows as a large group of young skaters stream across the park and hurl themselves into the sky one last time before night overtakes day.

The Marina Skate Park, located at 304 Hillcrest Ave. in Marina, is free and open to the public from dawn until dusk.