

The Original Road Trip: California's Central Coast Recreational Bicycling



7 Day Itinerary traveling from San Francisco to Los Angeles

DAY 1

Arrive at San Francisco International Airport (SFO) and drive approximately 76 miles / 122 km, 1 hour 30 minutes, to Santa Cruz County

DAY 2

Your first option to bicycle on the CA Central Coast in Santa Cruz and San Benito County.

Santa Cruz County is a veritable mecca for bicyclists. Winding single tracks through shaded redwoods and climbing roads with stunning vistas of the Monterey Bay provide a full range of trails for all skill levels. Both athletes and novice cyclists flock to Big Basin, Nisene Marks, Henry Cowell, and Wilder Ranch State Parks for epic biking opportunities. Cyclists can ride the steam train at Roaring Camp Railroads in Felton up Bear Mountain and then coast the downhill trail past auburn redwood trees. Bonny Doon Road north of Santa Cruz and Soquel's Demonstration Forest are also hot spots for passionate bikers. Between Natural Bridges State Beach and the Santa Cruz Wharf, West Cliff Drive is a two-and-a-half mile path overlooking Monterey Bay, popular for casual bike rides. And the trails at UC Santa Cruz are popular with all riders and skill levels. www.santacruzcounty.travel

Or drive an additional 20 miles / 25 km, 16 minutes, to San Juan Bautista in San Benito County

Henry Coe Park is one of the most bike-friendly parks in the **Gilroy/Morgan Hill** area. About 64,000 acres of the park are open to mountain bikes. To describe the terrain of Coe Park as challenging is a considerable understatement. Bikers should be in top physical condition for this ride! For information, www.coe.org or for more details about the area www.gilroyvisitor.org

Drive 20 miles / 32 km, 23 minutes to Salinas in Monterey County to overnight.

If you have a group that feels like they just can't wait to see the Salad Bowl of the USA firsthand – let them ride between Santa Cruz and Monterey along Highway 1. Fields of strawberries, artichokes, broccoli, organic lettuce, and barber pole-like stocks of Brussels sprouts will be your scenery until you reach the fishing boat at Moss Landing, the scores of migratory birds in the Elkorn Slough, and the dramatic mountains of sand in the ocean dunes.

DAY 3

With year-round mild weather, **Monterey County** is an ideal bicycling friendly community. Bring your own or rent by the hour – it's all just for fun. For a relaxed family surrey ride or just a casual cycle, ride the 18-mile Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Recreational Trail from Asilomar Beach in Pacific Grove. Meander along Monterey Bay through Cannery Row and past Fisherman's Wharf to beyond the sand

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dunes and the collection of giant kites of Seaside. A more challenging outing would be the 26 miles from Carmel-by-the-Sea to Big Sur along Highway 1, the most scenic highway in the USA. The former Ft. Ord is home to mountain bike trails and obstacle courses to delight the daredevils. Endurance riders can tackle Fremont Peak. A unique experience is The Twilight Ride, when world-class raceway Laguna Seca opens the track to recreational cyclists, including children. Since the "Twilights" inception last year, over 1,000 cyclists have come out to pedal, climb and descend the 11-turn layout with a 300- foot elevation change over the 2.3-mile course. Check the dates at http://www.mazdaraceway.com/pages/bike_ride, as they change monthly. . The most dynamic ride would be the "The Loop," a 100-mile ride that loops through Salinas and Carmel Valley. And the most noteworthy: riding the 17-Mile Drive through Pebble Beach starting at Pacific Grove to Carmel. There is something for every level of rider. www.seeMonterey.com

Drive 110 miles / 177 km, 1 hour 40 minutes, to San Luis Obispo County.

DAY 4

San Luis Obispo County offers some of the best bicycling in California. You can bike along much of scenic coastal Highways 1 and 101 or chose quiet country back roads along the many vineyards of the county. Whether you like to race, mountain bike or just cruise along, you'll find what you're looking for. One of the local favorites is the Bob Jones City to Sea Bike Trail. The Bob Jones City to Sea Bike Trail is a dedicated bike trail into Avila Beach that is popular for families of all ages. The trail is partially paved and will take you along the shaded tree-lined path past the golf course and out to the beach. Guided bike tours are also available along many of the roads and trails. With a guided bike tour, a van follows your ride if you chose to take a rest or want have someone else to carry the local SLO wines you purchase. Local SLO biking also has another fun side – after the first Farmers Market in downtown SLO every month ends at 9 PM, there is a “bike happening,” with a different fun theme each month. For more information, please visit: www.SanLuisObispoCounty.com

Drive 45 miles / 72 km, 53 minutes, to Santa Barbara County and plan to overnight.

Leisure cyclists will find miles of marked bike trails crisscrossing the **Santa Barbara** city and linking it to the sea. Pick up a map at the Visitors Center, and then set off on Santa Barbara Street toward historic Mission Santa Barbara. From there you can head back downhill to the city center, shop and lunch on State Street, or climb a bit to Mountain Road and follow the smooth, winding, nearly flat route past streams and lookout points en route to lunch in celebrity-stocked Montecito. Make your way down Olive Mill Road to Butterfly Beach and the Four Seasons Resort. From there it's a short distance to the three-mile paved bike path that runs along Cabrillo Boulevard past the Andree Clark Bird Refuge, the volleyball courts at East Beach, Stearns Wharf, West Beach, the Harbor and Leadbetter Beach to lovely Shoreline Park. Continue from there, and you'll soon be grunting up the hills of Hope Ranch, past the multi-million-dollar estates and towering palm trees lining aptly named Las Palmas Drive. Loops, out-and-backs, hills, flats, easy and hard – when it comes to bike trails, Santa Barbara has it all. For a map of great rides or companies that offer guided rides, go to the Santa Barbara Bicycle Coalition website at sbbike.org. If you don't have your own bike, you can rent one. Whether you prefer a single-speed

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cruiser, a deluxe 21-speed mountain bike, or a family surrey (four-wheel bicycles for six, fringe included), you'll find it about a block from the ocean on State Street. www.SantaBarbaraCA.com

DAY 5

Begin your day driving south 30 miles / 48 km, 30 minutes to Solvang in Santa Barbara County

Visitors to **Solvang** and the surrounding **Santa Ynez Valley** have discovered what seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong and other pro cyclists know – from rolling country lanes through vineyards to strenuous mountain climbs, there is something for every level and type of cycling ability here year-round. There are spacious, country roads, designated painted bike lanes on many streets, as well as a scenic bike path perfect for families on their way to a nearby playground. Bikes can be rented locally, and several companies offer guided rides. Solvang was proud host of the 2007, 2008 and 2009 *Amgen Tour of California* Individual Time Trial. Lance Armstrong and his pro team and many others train here each year. Solvang hosts some of the largest amateur cycling events in the USA, such as the Solvang Century (5,000+ riders every March) and the Solvang Prelude (3,000+ every November). The *Los Angeles Times* noted, "It is something of a cycling Mecca," There are many resources for road cycling, mountain biking, and more at www.SolvangUSA.com and www.SantaYnezValleyVisit.com.

Overnight at Cachuma Lake

DAY 6

Get an early start and drive 57 miles / 92 km, 1 hour and 4 minutes, Ventura County

Hit the trails in **Ventura County** and discover natural beauty along the mountains and seaside. Catch several different trails in downtown Ventura leading along the coast or up to the majestic peaks of our nearby mountains. There are trails to suit all levels of biking enthusiasts. The Ventura River Trail that follows the old Southern Pacific Railroad right-of-way from Main Street to Foster Park 6.3 miles inland. Opened in 1999, this pedestrian and bicycle path links the Ojai Valley Trail and the Coastal Omer Rains Trail for one of the best 17-mile urban bike rides in Southern California – from the Ventura Pier to Fox Street in Ojai. Stop by the Ventura Visitor Center for a free trail guide today! Ventura Bike Depot in downtown Ventura offers guided adventure bike tours from Sulphur Mountain. The Ventura Harbor is now more accessible with a new bike lane on Spinnaker Drive that goes along the beach and the harbor with easy riding to visit the Channel Islands National Park Visitor Center, Harbor Cove Beach, and the Ventura Harbor Village. Wheel Fun Rentals has several locations in Ventura and Oxnard to rent a wide array of unique cycles, surreys, choppers, deuce coupes, quad sports tandems and cruisers to explore this picturesque region. www.ventura-usa.com

DAY 7

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To depart out of Los Angeles International Airport, drive 58 miles / 93 km, 1 hour 18 minutes from Oxnard (recommended drive: 101 South – exit Las Posas to Scenic Highway 1 – Pacific Coast Highway).