

The Original Road Trip: California's Central Coast Soft Adventure



7 DAY ITINERARY TRAVELING FROM LOS ANGELES TO SAN FRANCISCO

DAY 1

Arrive in Los Angeles.

Drive north on 405/101 to Santa Barbara (95 mi/150 km; 1 hour 40 minutes).

Santa Barbara

- Santa Barbara is the gateway to the **Channel Islands**, which are among the world's prime whale-watching grounds. More than two dozen species are present at various times as they follow eons-old migratory routes through the nutrient-rich waters around **Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa** and **San Miguel Islands**. Both **Condor Whale Watching** and **Sunset Kidd Sailing & Whale Watching** will put you in the right place to spot gray, humpback and minke whales, plus orcas (killer whales) and five types of dolphins, various sea lions, harbor and elephant seals, and sea otters. Summer visitors often spy 50-ton blue whales—the largest creatures ever to have inhabited the earth.

www.santabarbaraca.com

Overnight in Santa Barbara.

DAY 2

Drive to San Luis Obispo via Santa Ynez and Solvang (107 mi/165 km; 1 hour 45 minutes).

Santa Ynez Valley and Solvang

- The Santa Ynez Valley can fulfill your quest to see unique wildlife all in one day! Kids of all ages will enjoy these amazing animals. Start at **Ostrich Land**, a 33-acre breeding farm to see/feed more than 100 ostriches and some emus. Just a few blocks to the east is **Flag Is Up Farms**, home of Monty Roberts, the "Man Who Listens to Horses." Visitors are welcome to see the equine facilities and trainers in action. Proceed east on Highway 246 through Solvang and turn north on Alamo Pintado Road to discover **Quicksilver Miniature Horse Ranch**, a fascinating breeding facility for 34-inch and under horses that welcomes visitors daily for free viewing from 10am-3pm.
www.santaynezvalleyvisit.com
- Solvang is a Bicycling Mecca and Host of **Amgen Tour of California**. Discover what seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong and other pro cyclists know who train and ride here—Solvang is an ideal cycling area. Riders can leisurely tour the roads made famous by the film **Sideways** or push their limits on a 40-mile hilly workout on the same route used by the world's top pro riders. There are designated painted bike lanes on many roads plus a scenic bike path perfect for families on their way to a nearby playground. Solvang is the proud host of the Amgen Tour of California pro cycling race, as well as major amateur races throughout the year, attracting thousands of riders. The *Los Angeles Times* noted, "It is something of a cycling mecca." www.solvangusa.com

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Continue north on Hwy 101 to San Luis Obispo.

San Luis Obispo

- Escape to the picturesque **Montaña de Oro State Park**, and enjoy the solitude and freedom found along the park's network of trails and secluded beaches. At roughly 8,000 acres, Montaña de Oro is San Luis Obispo County's largest State Park. Visitors can explore the mystic majesty of the area from many trails along the park's rocky coastline or from atop the magnificent coastal mountains for which Montaña de Oro gets its name, "Mountain of Gold." Located only minutes outside downtown San Luis Obispo, this excursion offers bicyclists, hikers and equestrians varied terrain with beautiful ocean and canyon views. www.sanluisobispocounty.com

Overnight in San Luis Obispo.

DAY 3

Drive to Pismo Beach (13 mi/21 km; 15 minutes).

- **Pismo Beach** has many trails, parks and beach access locations that offer everything from an easy walk to a challenging hike, beautiful ocean views and recreation opportunities. Our award-winning **Parks, Trails & Beach Access Guide** has valuable information for your convenience. www.classicalifornia.com

Overnight in Pismo Beach.

DAY 4

Drive to Big Sur (117 mi/188 km; 2.5 hours).

Big Sur

- Watch for migrating whales, sea lions, and sea birds galore. Big Sur is a good place to stop, eat lunch and check out some of California State Parks: **San Simeon State Park, Limekiln Beach State Park, Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park, Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park, and Andrew Molera State Park**. Just before Carmel is the **Point Lobos State Park**. All these parks are on Hwy 1.

Drive to Monterey (29 mi/47 km; 45 minutes).

Monterey

- Kayak or bike from **Adventures by the Sea** and explore the marine mammals of the **Monterey Bay Sanctuary**. Take the **Recreation Trail** along 15 miles of gorgeous Monterey Bay shoreline, 95 percent of it is completely separated from vehicle roads. It goes from **Pebble Beach** to **Marina State Beach**.

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- For the more adventurous, scuba divers can track the monsters of the deep—reportedly sighted just off the Big Sur Coast—or the giant squid spotted in the depths of **Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary**'s underwater canyon, twice as deep as the Grand Canyon. Novices can sleuth the seas via **Monterey Bay Dive Center** with a full day Discover SCUBA program. Instruction and dives at the Sanctuary, Point Lobos State Park or San Carlos Beach offer insight into the region's rich diversity of sea life.
- For the younger set, **Monterey Bay Aquarium**'s Underwater Explorers program treats kids 8 - 13 years to an aquatic adventure with a surface SCUBA dive in the Great Tide Pool on Monterey Bay. www.seemonterey.com

Overnight in Monterey.

DAY 5

Drive to Gilroy (41 mi/66 km; 45 minutes).

Gilroy

- Outdoor enthusiasts will find the lushly wooded **Uvas Canyon Park**, with more than 1,200 acres, has much to offer. The park has seven miles of hiking trails, including a one-mile Waterfall Loop that travels along Swanson Creek past many of the park's waterfalls. Available at the Ranger Station, a self-guided interpretive pamphlet highlights the flora of Uvas Canyon. Nestled on the eastern side of the Santa Cruz Mountains, this park is open year-round from 8am to sunset. www.gilroyvisitor.org

Overnight in Gilroy.

DAY 6

Drive to Santa Cruz on Hwy 152 via Mt. Madonna County Park (41 mi/66 km; 50 minutes).

Santa Cruz County

- A visit to Santa Cruz County would not be complete without trying its signature sport: surfing! Year-round surf schools emphasize the basics of waves, how to safely navigate boards in the water, and how to stand on boards to catch a wave from a resting position. **Cowell Beach**, next to the **Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf**, and **Capitola Beach** are two of the best places to learn to surf.
- In the evening, visit the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk everyday from Memorial Day to Labor Day, and on weekends the rest of the year. www.beachboardwalk.com
- If you just want to capture the surfing spirit, stop by **Lighthouse Point** and watch surfers glide over the waves. The point overlooks **Steamer Lane**, Santa Cruz's legendary surfing spot. Another great

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surf spot is **Pleasure Point**, where experienced wave riders challenge themselves at “The Hook.”
www.santacruz.org

Overnight in Santa Cruz.

DAY 7

***Drive to San Francisco (75 mi/120 km; 1 hour 25 minutes).
Depart from San Francisco International Airport (SFO).***