

The Original Road Trip: California's Central Coast 10 Days of Diverse Activities



10 DAY ITINERARY TRAVELING FROM LOS ANGELES TO SAN FRANCISCO

DAY 1

Arrive in Los Angeles.

Drive north on 405/101 for overnight accommodations in Oxnard (62 mi/100 km; 1 hour 10 minutes).

DAY 2

Oxnard

- Fresh. Fabulous. Retro. You'll find all three in downtown Oxnard at Fresh & Fabulous Café and Bakery located in the restored Woolworth Building. Retro-style vinyl booths and '60s-style lighting mix with modern-day healthy treats for a one-of-a-kind dining experience. After your meal, tour the nation's only **Woolworth Museum** located adjacent to the café. On display are lunch counter menus and memorabilia, original signs from the '30s, and a 1940s take-your-own photo booth. Journey further back in time to **Heritage Square**, just three blocks away, to tour an impressive collection of late 19th and early 20th century houses.
- Central Coast wine tasting begins in Oxnard, just an hour north of L.A., at **Herzog Wine Cellars**, the nation's largest producer of kosher wines, and home to award-winning Mediterranean-inspired seasonal cuisine at **Tierra Sur Restaurant**. Herzog is the starting point for the Ventura County Wine Trail, which includes a stop at the newly opened, picturesque **Rancho Ventavo Cellars Tasting Room** at Oxnard's Heritage Square. Across the brick walkway, **La Dolce Vita Restaurant** is a great spot for lunch, dinner and monthly cooking classes. Stop by the California Welcome Center in Oxnard to pick up the **Ventura County Wine Trail** map, and recommendations on great local restaurants.
www.visitoxnard.com

Continue north on Hwy 101 to Ventura (13 mi/21 km; 17 minutes).

Ventura

- **The Olivas Adobe** is an outstanding example of a two-story Monterey-style adobe. Don Raymundo Olivas built the Olivas Adobe after he received a Mexican land grant in 1841. Visitors can tour the Adobe's lovely garden, which contains 100-year-old fuchsias and a grape arbor dating from the early California Mission period. Visitors can also see exhibits of the Olivas family photographs in the parlor and period furnishings in the other rooms. The Adobe's outside grounds are open daily, with docent-guided tours on Saturday and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- An array of restaurants dishing up delectable delicacies satisfying every craving while in Ventura. You'll find menus from all corners of the globe—California, the Mediterranean, Thailand, France, India, Ireland, and Argentina, just to name a few! In addition to these restaurants, you'll find bakeries, coffee shops and many wine bars for tasting and shopping and other necessary

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indulgences. Wine Bars: **Wine Rack, The Westside Wine Cellar, Paradise Pantry**. Restaurants with seating capacity for 50+ people, **Jonathan's, The Sidecar, The Greek, Tutti's**. www.ventura-usa.com

Overnight in Ventura.

DAY 3

Drive north on Hwy 101 to Santa Barbara (28 mi/45 km; 30 minutes).

Santa Barbara

- Don't miss the **Old Mission Santa Barbara**, the 10th of the California Missions founded by the Spanish Franciscans and the only one to be continuously occupied and used since its founding in 1786. Self-guided tours begin in the gift shop and explore eight restored rooms, the cloister gardens, chapel, historic cemetery, and beautiful Moorish fountain and courtyard. Its beautiful setting, unique twin bell towers, and lovely façade have earned it the title "Queen of Missions." Customizable docent-led group tours are also available and provide a memorable experience for visitors. santabarbaramission.org
- 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.nps.gov/chis
- Santa Barbara is uniquely self-sustaining when it comes to food, and offers a truly regional culinary experience. Fresh, seasonal produce is readily available at daily farmers' markets and local grocery stores. Fresh seafood from the Santa Barbara Channel is served up in local eateries, and you can even buy seafood right off the boat at the **Santa Barbara Harbor**. Learn how to eat like a locavore (eating food grown within a 100-mile radius of where you live) on a guided culinary tour of Santa Barbara with market forays. After collecting ingredients at the **Fishermen's Market, Farmers' Market**, and local stores, Slow-Foodie guide Laurence Hauben will teach you how you can prepare dishes easily at home. The experience concludes with a delicious meal paired to local wines. Tours are customizable.
- Santa Barbara is famous for its active, outdoor lifestyle and its vast array of recreational opportunities. But exercise is only part of the equation. The body needs pampering after exertion. And for that, Santa Barbara is a dream-come-true. Rich in health and wellness options, from yoga classes to fitness clubs, the county is a genuine paradise of day spas. Treatments range from every style of massage to wraps, chocolate scrubs, acupressure in water, and beyond. Santa Barbara offers both day and overnight spas in all price ranges. If you are interested in a tasteful hotel spa, make

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your reservations at: **Harbor View Inn, Fess Parker's DoubleTree Resort, Bacara Resort and Spa, or Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara.** www.santabarbaraca.com

Overnight In Santa Barbara.

DAY 4

Morning: drive to Santa Ynez Valley/Solvang (35 mi/56 km; 50 minutes).

**Recommended to take Hwy 154/San Marcos Pass into Santa Ynez Valley to experience breathtaking natural vistas.*

Santa Ynez

- **Wildling Art Museum's** new facility in Los Olivos is one of eight **Santa Ynez Valley Museums**. The new building in Los Olivos celebrates the nation's wild places as seen through the eyes of its finest painters, printmakers, photographers, and sculptors. It is the only museum in the United States with this sole focus. Other Santa Ynez Valley cultural attractions include the **Santa Ynez Valley Historical Museum & Carriage House** in Santa Ynez; **History Rooms** in Los Alamos and Buellton; **Elverhoj Museum of History & Art**; **Hans Christian Andersen Museum**; **Vintage Motorcycle Museum** and **Old Mission Santa Ines Museum** in Solvang.
- When touring and tasting in the scenic Santa Ynez Valley, visitors quickly work up an appetite. Now, there are four 4-diamond properties in the heart of Santa Barbara County's famed wine country—the **Petersen Village Inn & Café Provence** in Solvang, with charming antique-filled accommodations; the **Ballard Inn & Restaurant**, with chef/owner Budi Kazali's fusion cuisine; Santa Ynez Inn, offering Victorian elegance and Chef Heather Henry's gourmet breakfasts; and luxe dinners at **Willows Restaurant** at the **Chumash Casino Resort** in Santa Ynez.
- 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 10 am-3pm.
www.santaynezvalleyvisit.com

Solvang

- Every summer from June through September, the **PCPA's (Pacific Conservatory of Performing Arts)** productions of live, professional plays, musicals and comedies are performed under the stars at the **Solvang Festival Theater**, a 700-seat venue in the half-round. Located downtown within easy walking distance of hotels and restaurants, numerous overnight packages and dinner specials are available—for both individuals and groups.

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- 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."
- New this year, Master Chef Bradley Ogden brings his James Beard Award-winning culinary expertise (including One Market San Francisco) to Solvang in the Santa Ynez Valley wine country with **Root 246**, a restaurant owned by the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians. Ogden's newest restaurant features his signature farm-to-table gourmet dishes and extensive selection of local wines from the heart of Solvang. Individuals and groups welcome.
- Solvang: a walking smorgasbord. More than a dozen wine-tasting rooms and 30 charming eateries and authentic bakeries dot this undeniably Danish-themed town. Food lovers enjoy a diverse array of Danish, American and ethnic cuisine from gourmet to economical cafes. Scandinavian fare is readily available, including Danish aebleskiver and pastries, as well as smorgasbords.
www.solvangusa.com

Drive to Santa Maria (36 mi/58 km; 37 minutes).

**Recommended to take Hwy 154 to Zaca Station Road. Follow the Foxen Canyon wine trail through the Santa Ynez Wine Country/Santa Maria Valley. This drive will take you through the patchwork of farms, orchards, and vineyards that encompass the valley.*

Santa Maria

- Hollywood props fly high at the **Santa Maria Museum of Flight**. Among the museum's featured movie props are an H1 Racer from *The Aviator*, a full-scale Wright glider from *Winds of Kitty Hawk* and a large radio-controlled model airplane that flew in the *Flight of the Phoenix*. Even the museum's main building is an original wooden hangar that was featured in the movie *The Rocketeer*. A custom acrobatic plane from *The Rocketeer* is also featured. However, there's much more than Hollywood at the heart of this little museum, which features a variety of planes, models, photos, memorabilia and exhibits, including a restored F4 fighter jet that served in Vietnam and a 1929 Fleet biplane. www.smmof.org
- Savor the sizzling flavors of Santa Maria-style barbecue at a number of legendary restaurants in the Santa Maria Valley on California's Central Coast. This 150-year-old regional culinary tradition is founded on native ingredients and local methods for a uniquely flavorful dining experience. Local landmark barbecue restaurants include the **Hitching Post**, **Far Western Tavern** and **Jocko's**, all of which have been going strong for more than 50 years. Today, no Santa Maria-style barbecue meal is

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complete without a glass of Pinot Noir or Syrah from the Santa Maria Valley wine country.
www.santamariavisitor.com

Overnight in Santa Maria.

DAY 5

Drive north on Hwy 101 to Pismo Beach (20 mi/32 km; 22 minutes).

Pismo Beach

Splash in for a bowl of award-winning clam chowder! **Splash Café** has been a Pismo Beach destination, attracting visitors and locals alike since the late 1980s. With a consistent line of hungry guests stretching around the block, it is easy to understand how this world famous creamy clam chowder has been winning awards for over 10 years. This casual beach-oriented café has been featured in several national publications and received requests from *Gourmet* and *Bon Appétit* magazines for the secret clam chowder recipe. Splash Café serves more than 15,000 gallons of clam chowder a year in their Pismo Beach café! This must-stop destination is definitely worth the wait.

The Great American Melodrama & Vaudeville offers visitors an atmosphere of old-time theater complete with cabaret tables, sawdust on the floor, and honky-tonk piano music. Professional performers present top-notch productions of great classic comedies, melodramas and thrillers.
www.classicalcalifornia.com

Drive to San Luis Obispo (13 mi/21 km; 15 minutes).

San Luis Obispo

- Explore downtown San Luis Obispo by foot! This fun and informative walking tour offers a glimpse into both the historic and contemporary San Luis Obispo, including: the **Mission, Old Chinatown, Bubble Gum Alley**, America's first solar-powered movie theater, and historic adobe structures. During the journey, you will examine the ways in which San Luis Obispo has been shaped by floods, fires, earthquakes, and discuss the time spent here by notable personalities such as William Randolph Hearst, Jack Kerouac, and Timothy Leary.
- The tour also points out art galleries, cafes, and restaurant frequented by locals. Tours are available seven days a week between the hours of 9am and 5pm. Reservations are required based on the nature of the tour and are recommended to be made within a week's advance notice. The fee for the tour is \$10 per person, group rates may apply. Tour is about 90 minutes in length.
- Relax in California's natural escape by soaking in one of San Luis Obispo County's **hot mineral springs**. This type of rejuvenation began as a healing practice with ancient Egyptians and Roman roots and continues to serve our contemporary worldwide culture. The water found in the natural mineral springs are rich in sulfur compounds and trace minerals, which assist healing in a variety of

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ways. San Luis Obispo County offers visitors two distinct regions in which to experience the natural hot springs. In the northern portion of the county, the **Paso Robles Inn** offers guests a relaxing stay in their choice of Spa Rooms, complete with a private hot springs mineral spa tub. And since the inn is conveniently located in Paso Robles Wine Country, your relaxing experience will be complete with a glass of local wine. In the southern portion of the county, **Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort** offers guests the full wellness experience. Complete with mineral springs, yoga classes, and a meditation garden, this resort is a true escape.

- 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.sanluisobispo.com

Drive to Paso Robles, also in San Luis Obispo County (28 mi/45 km; 30 minutes).

Paso Robles Wine Country

- Located along California's famed Central Coast is Paso Robles Wine Country. In Paso Robles, a day of wine tasting and touring begins with a scenic drive along the country roads. The rolling hills and rural setting make for a truly authentic wine country experience. Guests will discover an array of wineries—many, family owned and operated—with the owner or winemaker greeting you upon arrival. Pack your picnic lunch to enjoy on the winery grounds, chat with the winemaker, and explore California's fastest-growing wine region. A long growing season of warm days and cool evenings give rise to vibrantly ripened fruit with dynamic flavor that translate beautifully in your glass of Paso Robles wine. You'll experience premium wines and discover what makes Paso Robles Wine Country distinctly different. www.sanluisobispo.com

Overnight in Paso Robles.

DAY 6

Drive to Hearst Castle, in San Simeon (37 mi/60 km; 45 minutes).

**Recommended to take Hwy 46 west from Paso Robles through the wine country to Hwy 1 to experience breathtaking natural vistas.*

Hearst Castle

- Set atop the rolling hills in San Simeon is **Hearst Castle®**, one of the most popular tourist destinations in California. Originally built as the private estate of art collector and publisher W.R. Hearst, today it is recognized worldwide for its glamour, elegance and authentic art pieces. As a California State Park, it is open to the public daily for guided tours. Feel the allure of this fascinating

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country house, where Mr. Hearst entertained movie stars and business tycoons with lavish dinners, private film screenings and glittering parties. Tour reservations are strongly recommended.

www.hearstcastle.org

Drive to Big Sur (65 mi/105 km; 1 hour 30 minutes).

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 for overnight accommodations (29 mi/47 km; 45 minutes).

Overnight in Monterey.

DAY 7

Monterey

- **Walk Monterey's Path of History** as a free self-guided tour of Old Monterey, marked by easy-to-distinguish yellow tiles set in the sidewalk. This walk explores the fully restored historic adobes, gardens and sites of interest, such as **Colton Hall**, where the California Constitution was created and California's first theater was built. Guided tours are also available to such sites as the **Cooper Molera House and Garden**, **Custom House**, **Larkin House**, **Casa Soberanes**. Prior to going on the Path of History, view a short film at the **Monterey Maritime Museum** that provides a good introduction to the history of the area.
- Monterey County's Salinas Valley is the home of the "Salad Bowl of the World." Take an agricultural tour, wine trek or visit the nation's first (and largest) working organic farm—**Earthbound Farms**. Take public transit—Grapevine Express—to the organic gardens and 10 wineries on Carmel Valley Road. Wine experts have identified the areas as "uniquely suited to raising high-grade grapes." There are 85 vintners and growers with over 40,000 acres to learn about. Year-round temperate climate, rich soils, and unparalleled infrastructure make this area an ideal place to learn best practices and to discover new ways of preparing Mother Nature's best.
- 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**.
- 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.

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- 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
- Roof top hot tubs over looking Monterey Bay and serene tropical gardens are some of the picturesque environments that calm the soul naturally in Monterey County spas. They pride themselves on pleasing even the most discerning of customers in this world-class spa destination. The highly skilled and educated practitioners hold certifications from locally acclaimed programs, such as Big Sur's **Esalen Institute**, which boasts natural hot springs and baths perched in the cliffs over the Pacific Ocean. Treatments are available in Shiatsu and Reiki as well as cranial-sacral therapy, aromatherapy, and Swedish, sport and La Stone massage. Several types of facials, body treatments and beauty services like Vichy showers and hydrotherapy in specialized tubs are also offered. Truly a heaven on earth experience. www.esalen.org

Overnight in Monterey.

DAY 8

Drive to Gilroy (40 mi/64 km; 45 minutes).

Gilroy

- **Chitactac Adams Heritage County Park** offers a unique view into the Native American culture of Santa Clara County before and after the arrival of the Spanish. A self-guided interpretive walk around the site, including eight stations with interpretive panels, is supplemented by an interpretive shelter with panels and displays. The trail panels include photographs and original art depicting Ohlone village life, Ohlone buildings, petroglyphs, Ohlone food processing, and the natural history of Spanish California and Ohlone culture in the 19th and 20th centuries. Open daily year-round from 8 am to sunset, this four-acre site is located just minutes from the cities of Gilroy and Morgan Hill on Watsonville Road. Admission is free.
- **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 8 a.m. to sunset. www.gilroyvisitor.org

Overnight in Gilroy.

DAY 9

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Drive to Santa Cruz (41 mi/66 km; 50 minutes).

Santa Cruz

- History doesn't have to be stuffy! Explore a unique California Historic Landmark: the **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk** seaside amusement park. This park is home to two National Historic Landmarks, the 1924 **Giant Dipper** wooden roller coaster, and the 1911 **Looff Carousel**. Admission to the park is free (rides are extra), a walking tour brochure costs \$3. Interpretive signs are located throughout the family amusement park, and a historium is located upstairs in **Neptune's Kingdom**. Enjoy on-site restaurants, shops, a great beach, and of course, fun rides! www.beachboardwalk.com
- 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.
- 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 surf spot is **Pleasure Point**, where experienced wave riders challenge themselves at "The Hook."
- Move over, hot stone massage; there's a new treatment in town, and it can only be found at **the Spa at Chaminade**, built high on a scenic mountain ridge. The Hot Shell Massage uses all-natural Tiger Clam seashells and other elements from the ocean along with a mixture of purified water, salt and lavender essential oils. The heat from the shells penetrates muscles, helping achieve a deep state of relaxation. The shells are also used in various deep-tissue and effleurage massage strokes to soothe tired muscles. This new trend in spa treatment is found exclusively at the Spa at Chaminade, which also offers a menu that reflects the Santa Cruz County landscape: vineyard, farm, mountain and ocean-themed treatments. Guests of the spa have access to Chaminade's hiking trails, pool, tennis courts and gym during their visit. www.santacruz.org

Overnight in Santa Cruz.

DAY 10

Drive to San Francisco (75 mi/121 km, 1 hour 25 minutes).

Depart from San Francisco International Airport (SFO).