

# Monterey Bay Region: Santa Cruz Local Attractions



## LOCAL HIGHLIGHTS IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

With 29 miles of sun-drenched coastline, Santa Cruz County offers some of California's best beaches, perfect for surfing or volleyball—but the fun only starts at the beach! Explore the majestic redwood forests in Santa Cruz County's 14 state parks. Visit the beach boardwalk or one of the local neighborhoods. There are many fun things to see and do in Santa Cruz County for every budget.

[www.santacruzcounty.travel](http://www.santacruzcounty.travel)

### *Outdoors in Santa Cruz County*

The **Santa Cruz Mountains** and **Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary** regions are known for their scenic beauty and unblemished landscapes. Visitors are welcome to explore, and enjoy, over 100,000 acres of public parks, beaches, mountain forests, wildlife habitats, and to participate in the countless recreation options offered at these places.

- Santa Cruz County beaches offer the perfect setting for seaside fun. Enjoy surfing, playing beach volleyball, or hiking along the coastal bluffs—our beaches offer something for everyone.
- **Main Beach** right next to the **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk** and **Cowell Beach**, are both walking distance from downtown, and invite sun worshippers to play volleyball, swim, surf or stroll along the sandy beach. Lifeguards all summer long.
- Most public parks provide accessible routes to main areas and some trails. Some places offer assist programs for wildlife viewing and recreation services. Contact facility for details. Please stay on designated paths. Trailhead signs identify approval for bikes, horses, and on-leash dog access. Trail maps are available at parks, posted at trailhead, and online.

### *Arts and Culture*

Santa Cruz County showcases an array of talent through its art galleries, museums, festivals, and outdoor theater performances. Premiere cultural events include:

- Shakespeare Santa Cruz
- The Capitola Art & Wine Festival
- Cabrillo Music Festival
- The Santa Cruz Film Festival
- Artist Open Studios

### *Family Fun*

With its family-friendly beaches and attractions, miles of open space and fun events for kids, Santa Cruz County is a kid friendly destination.

- The **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk** was voted the "World's Best Seaside Amusement Park." The admission-free Boardwalk is located on a mile of sandy beach, walking distance from downtown. The **Casino Arcade** is ranked as one of the best arcades in the country, with more than 200 video and pinball games, a classic corner, plus laser tag. [www.beachboardwalk.com](http://www.beachboardwalk.com)
- Take **Roaring Camp Railroad** on a ride through the redwoods. [www.roaringcamp.com](http://www.roaringcamp.com)
- There are several local skate parks.
- Take surfing lessons at **Cowell Beach**.
- **Boardwalk Bowl** family bowling center is fun for the whole family with a restaurant, bar and

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ocean-view patio. Great for birthday parties, and special evening activities include Atomic Bowling, live music and karaoke. [www.boardwalkbowl.com](http://www.boardwalkbowl.com)

- The **Seymour Marine Discovery Center at Long Marine Lab** includes exhibits, aquariums, daily tours, the world's largest blue whale skeleton, touch tank, gift shop and unsurpassed vistas of the Pacific coast.

## ***Farms and Markets***

Although Watsonville is known for its abundance of strawberries and a long history of apple production, a wealth of locally grown fruits and vegetables are stars of the show at farmers' markets throughout Santa Cruz County. These veritable boutiques of nature can be found throughout the area, and often host special cooking and gardening-related events.

- The **Downtown Santa Cruz Farmers' Market** provides direct access to sustainable sources of local fresh produce and other unique foods every Wednesday in downtown Santa Cruz.
- In fact, there is a farmer's market in Santa Cruz County nearly every day of the week, featuring fresh seafood, goat cheese, organically-grown fruits and vegetables, locally-grown lavender, cut flowers and other items. [www.santacruzfarmersmarket.org](http://www.santacruzfarmersmarket.org)

## ***Parks***

Santa Cruz County is one of the few places where a trail can begin in a redwood forest and end on the beach. Hiking trails wind past majestic old-growth redwoods and graceful waterfalls at **Big Basin Redwoods State Park, Wilder Ranch State Park, and Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park**, just to name a few. Santa Cruz County has 14 state parks in all, including **Natural Bridges State Beach, Manresa State Beach** and many others.

## ***Sports and Recreation***

The surfing scene in Santa Cruz County is unparalleled, earning our town the nickname "Surf City," but we also offer much more when it comes to outdoor activities.

- Those wanting to embrace the local healthy lifestyle can also try scenic bike rides, kayaking, camping, whale watching, hiking in the redwoods, sailing, mountain biking, kiteboarding and skateboarding.
- Santa Cruz County is home to Capitola's **Wharf to Wharf** foot race, the **Santa Cruz Mountains Challenge** cycling event, and the **Longboard Invitational** surfing contest every Memorial Day weekend, among others.
- From mountain biking at **Wilder Ranch State Park** or birding in the **Watsonville Wetlands**, there are a wide range of activities you can enjoy in the great outdoors.

## ***Wildlife Adventures***

One of the most exciting reasons to visit Santa Cruz County is to see wildlife. Wildlife watching in Santa Cruz County is rich with opportunities to view elephant seals, wintering monarch butterflies, and go whale watching or bird watching.

- The nearby **Elkhorn Slough** and Watsonville's Wetlands to the south, support hundreds of birds that pass through or find permanent refuge there. [www.elkhornslough.org](http://www.elkhornslough.org)
- Santa Cruz is located on the northern part of the **Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary** and

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afternoons can be spent spotting dolphins, sea otters and other marine life from the beaches or out on carted boats year-round.

- On the northern part of town, **Natural Bridges State Beach** is known as the local home for migratory monarch butterflies October through January. There is a Visitor Center and docents available. The beach also has numerous tide pools and a natural rock arch just offshore.
- The annual **Monterey Bay Birding Festival** in Watsonville is a great way to view a variety of birds and other animals that call this area home.

## ***Wine Tasting***

With over 70 wineries and tasting rooms, the **Santa Cruz Mountains Appellation** is one of the oldest wine regions in the United States, known for award-winning pinot noir and other wines.

- In fact, the wine scene in Santa Cruz County is as diverse as the region's sights and as inspired as its culture. Many local wineries celebrate the county's varietals with an eclectic mix of fun and entertaining events as well.
- Art and wine festivals in Scotts Valley, Boulder Creek and Capitola attract wine lovers ready to celebrate the crush as well as a number of year-round wine-related events paired with delicious cuisine. [www.scmwa.com](http://www.scmwa.com)