

The Original Road Trip: Free Things To Do along California's Central Coast



7 Day Itinerary traveling from Los Angeles to San Francisco

DAY 1

Arrive at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) and drive approximately 68 miles / 109 km, 1 hour 30 minutes, to Ventura County (recommended drive: scenic via Scenic Highway 1 – Pacific Coast Highway/ 101 North)

Spend the day in Ventura County

Create your own fun-filled Economic Stimulus Package with a plethora of free things to do in Ventura County, including:

- Public Murals, Art Museum and Airport Museum in Santa Paula
- Mission San Buenaventura, Historic Pier, Historic Downtown Walking Tour (self-guided and available at Ventura Visitor Center), Municipal Art Gallery at City Hall, First Friday Gallery Crawl and Grant Park in Ventura
- Ventura Harbor Village (free parking weekdays/weekends) offers walks along the seaside Promenade to view fishing boats, wildlife and spectacular sunsets. In winter months, stroll the beaches in search of colorful sea glass that the waves wash ashore at Ventura Harbor. Visit the Channel Islands National Park Visitor Center year round with free admission, a tidal pool exhibit, Channel Islands movie, and a look-out tower with 360 degree views of the harbor, islands and beaches
- Seabee Museum, Historic Pier and Lighthouse in Port Hueneme
- Heritage Square, Carnegie Art Museum in Oxnard
- Historic Promenade in Ojai

The Ventura Visitor Center also provides complimentary copies of the Historic Downtown Walking Tour Maps, Vintage Ventura Guides, Gallery Guides, Gear Guides and more for your window-shopping and sight-seeing pleasure. www.ventura-usa.com

Overnight in Ventura County

DAY 2

Drive 30 miles / 48 km, 30 minutes, to Santa Barbara and spend the day exploring the entire county (recommended drive: 101 North).

Santa Barbara County visitors can experience the superior quality of the local lifestyle and enjoy popular attractions on any budget. In fact, the most iconic Santa Barbara experiences come without a price tag. Some highlights include:

- Take the Red Tile Walking Tour, a 12-block journey through historic downtown.
- Don't miss the panoramic view from the 85-foot tower of the Santa Barbara County Courthouse.
- Rollerblade, bike or stroll the three-mile waterfront path beginning at the Harbor.
- Stroll and window shop along State Street in downtown Santa Barbara.

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- Visit the historical painted caves of the Chumash Indians.
- Picnic in the park and explore Nojoqui Falls County Park near Solvang.
- See the equine facilities and trainers in action at Flag Is Up Farms in Solvang, home of Monty Roberts, the "Man Who Listens to Horses."
- Discover Quicksilver Miniature Horse Ranch, also in Solvang, a fascinating breeding facility for 34-inch and under horses.
- Get up close and personal with miniature donkeys and mules at Seein' Spots Farm in Ballard.
- Experience the wonders of the wilderness through the eyes of artists by visiting the Wildling Art Museum in Los Olivos.
- Beautiful vistas and breathtaking dunes await visitors to the Santa Maria Valley's Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes Complex, which spans 22,000 acres and 18 miles of coastline.

www.SolvangUSA.com, www.SantaYnezValleyVisit.com, www.santamaria.com

For more great ideas for free things to do in Santa Barbara County, download the 101 Free Things to Do checklist at www.SantaBarbaraCA.com.

Overnight in Santa Maria

DAY 3

Take the 101 North for 33 miles / 53 km, 35 minutes, to San Luis Obispo.

Experiencing San Luis Obispo County doesn't need to cost you anything but time! There are so many free ways to explore each city in our county during every season:

- Visit one of the Farmers' Markets in the county
- Go tide pooling in Avila Beach
- Walk over the swinging bridge in Arroyo Grande'
- Gawk at the accumulation of '50s bubble gum in downtown San Luis Obispo's Bubble Gum Alley
- Visit the Historic Mission San Miguel
- Sample olive oils & tapenades in "We Olive" in downtown Paso Robles
- Build a sand castle at world-famous Pismo Beach,
- Watch the harbor seals play around the Hartford Pier in Avila Beach
- Fly a kite at Morro Strand State Beach
- Window shop around Cayucos
- Stroll through the Monarch Butterfly Grove in Grover Beach
- Hike along the cliff in Montano de Oro State Park in Los Osos
- Visit Green Acres Lavender Farm in Atascadero
- Hunt for moonstones and jade at Moonstone Beach in Cambria
- Watch the elephant seals in San Simeon

And that is only the beginning... for a complete list of over 175 Free Things To Do in SLO County visit www.sanluisobispo.com

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Overnight in San Luis Obispo County

DAY 4

Drive north 143 miles / 229 km, 2 hours 20 minutes to Monterey County along Hwy 101.

All year round locals and visitors alike revel in the endless variety of activities in which they can participate.

- Walk Monterey's Path of History by following the yellow tiles in the sidewalk.
- Drive the River Road Wine Trek of the Salinas Valley.
- Strolled through the West End Celebration (August) for local artist displays and live music.
- Hike the magnificent Point Lobos State Nature Reserve, a photographer's paradise.
- Bike the miles and miles of recreational trails along Monterey Bay or the mountain bike trails of Fort Ord.
- Numerous classic car events are held yearly, with street parades and corralled areas for car enthusiasts to drool over the artistry of the vehicles:
 - Cherry's Jubilee (September) and
 - Concours d'Elegance and Classic Car Week (August)
- Pacific Grove's Monarch Butterfly Sanctuary
- Henry Miller Memorial Library in Big Sur
- Earthbound Farms Organic Gardens in Carmel Valley and The Farm in Salinas,
- Dennis the Menace Playground for the kids in Monterey – the list could go on and on.

The best way to find out what goes on is to visit the website to see the calendar of events for the ever-evolving list of free things to do in this area: <http://www.seemonterey.com/calendar>

Overnight in Monterey County

DAY 5

Continue north 50 miles / 80 km, 57 minutes to San Benito/Santa Clara County.

Located between Highway 5 and Highway 101 on Highway 152 is the unique setting of Casa de Fruta. Founded in 1908, this family-friendly stop has delighted and refreshed travelers for decades.

- Discover friendly critters to pet at Casa de Zoo
- Pan for gemstones and minerals in a live water sluice
- Ride Casa de Choo Choo through the scenic sites,
- Satisfy your sweet tooth at Casa de Sweets
- Visit the fruit stand, grab a bite to eat, taste an award-winning wine

All this and more make Casa de Fruta an ideal location for family relaxation and fun.

www.gilroyvisitor.org

Overnight in Santa Clara County

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DAY 6

Drive 51 miles / 82 km, 1 hour, to Santa Cruz County.

Santa Cruz County is bustling with free activities for visitors:

- The legendary Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk is always admission-free and hosts Free Friday night summertime concerts and other free events during the year. During summer, Capitola's Esplanade Park offers free weekly twilight concerts.
- Free walking tours illustrate the history of Capitola, Boulder Creek, Watsonville, and the outdoor art and architecture of Santa Cruz.
- Free weekly guided nature walks of the Wetlands of Watsonville are an up-close way to view birds.
- Admission-free museums include the Santa Cruz Surfing Museum, Agricultural History Project, San Lorenzo Valley Historical Museum, Capitola Museum, and the Aptos History Museum.
- Free art galleries abound around town. Capitola's Art at the Beach and Scotts Valley's Art & Wine Festival each summer are other free ways to satisfy your cultural craving.
- With 29 miles of coastline, finding an admission-free beach for playing in the surf or lazing away on the sand is easy!

For more suggestions, visit www.santacruzcounty.travel.

Overnight in Santa Cruz County

DAY 7

To depart out of San Francisco International Airport (SFO) drive approximately 61 miles / 98 km, 1 hour 10 minutes, from Santa Cruz County.