

The Original Road Trip: California's Central Coast Piers, Wharfs, Harbors & Lighthouses



7 Day Itinerary traveling from San Francisco to Los Angeles

DAY 1

Arrive at San Francisco International Airport (SFO) and drive approximately 60 miles / 96 km, 1 hour, 10 minutes, to Santa Cruz County down Hwy 101 South to Hwy 17 West to Hwy.

The 96-year-old Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf stretches out a half-mile into the Monterey Bay. Lining the wharf are family-owned fish markets, restaurants, a wine tasting room and boutiques. Also enjoy the small seaside town of Capitola, which has a scenic wharf where you can dine, fish or rent a boat. Seacliff State Beach in Aptos is home to the *S.S. Palo Alto* (the Cement Ship), an experimental vessel constructed of concrete. It made just one voyage in 1919 before permanently docking at the 500-foot pier, now a favorite local fishing spot. Chartered sailing, whale watching tours and kayak rentals are offered from the Santa Cruz Harbor. Public art exhibits include a human sundial and an artistic rendition of a shipwreck. The majestic Mark Abbott Memorial Lighthouse is home to the Santa Cruz Surfing Museum and overlooks Steamer Lane, one of the best places in the country to surf. The classic Walton Lighthouse graces the west jetty of Santa Cruz Harbor.

www.santacruzcounty.travel

Overnight in Santa Cruz.

DAY 2

Depart for Monterey the next morning down Hwy 1 South , 45 miles, 45 minutes.

Seven thousand whales from four different species travel the waters of the Monterey Bay throughout the year, and pods of dolphins also pause here -- making the bay a favorite among whale watchers and nature enthusiasts. Monterey Bay is home to an underwater canyon nearly twice as deep as the Grand Canyon, which allows deep-water types of whales and dolphins to be spotted near the shore. Board the charter boats from two wharfs -- the world famous Fisherman's and the Municipal --which stick out like symbols of leisure and labor. The first is a lively promenade, teeming with bright restaurants offering clam chowder, shrimp scampi, and barbecued squid. The second is a no-frills motley collection of fisheries, among them the Monterey Abalone Company.

The oldest operating lighthouse on the Pacific Coast (1855) Point Piños is free to the public. Visitors learn about the local history and the French Fresnel lens and prisms that warn approaching sea vessels of the coast's dangerous shoals. (Open Thursday through Monday, 1 to 4 p.m.) Across from the lighthouse are sites for the kids to look for sea stars, hermit crabs, and turban snails in one of the world's richest tide pool habitats. For more information, visit www.seemonterey.com

Overnight in Monterey.

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DAY 3

Depart Monterey heading south on Hwy 1 toward San Simeon, 98 miles, 2.5 hours.

Piedras Blancas is located just north of San Simeon. The Piedras Blancas Light Station began operating in 1875 and for many years served as the guiding beacon to help the shipping industry and other marine vessels navigate the Central Coast of California. Over the years, the station has been managed by several government agencies. From 1875 to 1939, it was managed by the U.S. Lighthouse Service. In 1939 management passed to the U.S. Coast Guard, and in 2001 BLM took over management of the historic light Station and began the critical restoration work that can be seen today. Activities at the station include tours, wildlife viewing (northern elephant seals, harbor seals, California sea lions, California sea otters, grey whales, humpback whales, and a variety of marine and terrestrial birds), hiking the interpretive trail, and wildflower viewing. A walk around the Piedras Blancas Light Station is an absorbing experience. The site is distinguished by its unique and diverse marine life and native plants, the vitality of a healthy and thriving ecosystem, a rich and incomparable historical heritage. On-site scientific research includes population studies of grey whales, northern elephant seals, California sea otters, inter-tidal habitat changes, and collection of Pacific jet stream weather data. For more information, please visit www.sanluisobispo.com.

Continue south along Hwy 1 passing by Hearst Castle, a California State Park. You may wish to stop and enjoy a tour of this attraction.

Overnight in San Simeon or Cambria.

DAY 4

Continue South on Hwy 1 to Cayucos 22 miles, 20 minutes.

Cayucos Pier – Cass' Wharf

Cayucos is located just off Highway 1, between Morro Bay and Cambria, and only 30 minutes from Hearst Castle. The name Cayucos derives from the Spanish word "cayuco," which translates to "fishing canoe." It is a Spanish rendering of the Eskimo word "kayak" and apparently refers to the bidarkas of the Aleuts who were employed hunting sea otter along the California coast. The town was laid out and named in 1875. That same year saw the construction of a 940-foot-long pier by Captain James Cass, a pier that quickly became a regular stop for ships of the Pacific Steamship Company. The current pier replaced the original pier on the same site. Cass' Wharf is a free public fishing pier for rock fishing. The pier is open year round. For more information, please visit www.sanluisobispo.com.

Continue south along Hwy 1 toward Pismo Beach for 36 miles, 30 minutes.

Pismo Beach - Pismo Beach Pier

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Back in 1881, Pismo's original wharf opened for business, and today it continues to be one of the community's major attractions. Tourists and locals fish from the 1,200-foot historical pier, generally resulting in catches of perch, smelt, and sand dabs. No license is required for pier fishing. Bait, tackle and rental gear are available on the pier. For more information, please visit www.sanluisobispo.com.

Overnight in Pismo Beach.

Day 5

Drive South on Hwy 101 for 31 miles, 36 minutes to Santa Maria.

Oso Flaco Lake Natural Area showcases the beauty and diversity of the coastal environment of the Santa Maria Valley. The lake is easily accessible from scenic Highway 1, near the town of Guadalupe. Here, you can take a leisurely stroll across the lake along a wheelchair-accessible boardwalk that offers incredible views of the lush surrounding habitat and native wildlife, including a colorful variety of birds. Beyond the lake you will enter the stabilized dunes, where silver dune lupine, coyote bush, deer weed and dunes paintbrush and a wide variety of birds, reptiles, mammals and many other plants thrive. At the end of the boardwalk, you will find a viewing platform that affords scenic views of the entire San Luis Bay, from Point San Luis to the north, to Mussel Rock in the south. www.SantaMaria.com

Drive south on Hwy 101 to Solvang, 36 miles, 39 minutes to Solvang in Santa Barbara County.

Santa Barbara is home to California's oldest working wharf – Stearns Wharf. At almost 140 years old, Stearns Wharf has been a constant in the changing Santa Barbara harbor. Built in 1872 to serve cargo and passenger ships, the wharf housed floating casinos in the 1930s, and during World War II, it became a naval installation. Santa Barbara, situated perfectly between the coastline and the mountains, offers visitors the beauty of The American Riviera® while experiencing all that Stearns Wharf has to offer. The wharf's five million annual visitors are never disappointed, whether they want to sample the cuisine of Santa Barbara in one of many fine restaurants, shop for a souvenir, taste wine while enjoying panoramic views, or touch marine life at the Ty Warner Sea Center. www.SantaBarbaraCA.com

Overnight in Santa Barbara.

DAY 6

Drive South on Hwy 1 along the ocean to Ventura, 27 miles, 30 minutes.

Ventura County is home to a diverse collection of piers, wharves, working harbors and lighthouses. Two historic piers preserve the nautical nature of the region by giving visitors a glimpse into yesteryear and a peek at today's bounty of biodiversity. The Ventura Pier was built as a wharf in 1872 to foster trade and

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commerce. Today, the wharf district, or Front Street, is home to art galleries and other shops and establishments offering unique creations, while the pier is a pedestrian and fisherman's paradise. Similarly, the historic pier in Port Hueneme, built in 1872, was used for importing and exporting goods. Today, the pier is a great place to fish and watch for passing dolphins and whales. Port Hueneme Point also showcases a lighthouse, built in 1941, replacing the original, built in 1874. The lighthouse, featuring a fourth-order Fresnel lens, is open for tours the third Saturday of every month, from February through October, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Eleven miles across the Santa Barbara Channel is the historic Anacapa Island Lighthouse. Constructed in 1932 to replace the original, built in 1874, the structure sits atop the highest cliff of East Anacapa in the Channel Islands National Park.

A contemporary waterfront experience awaits in the beautiful Ventura County Harbors. Soak in the breathtaking beauty of the unspoiled California Coast at the Ventura Harbor Village. Relax and retreat on the waterfront promenade with a collection of coastal shops; harbor-side restaurants; a fish market, carousel and arcade; the Channel Islands National Park Visitor Center; boat tours; kayak rentals; homemade fudge and waffle cone ice creams; and waterfront hotels. The Ventura Harbor Village is a place where visitors can shop, dine, stay, play and explore the real California. The nearby Channel Islands Harbor in Oxnard is home to Marine Emporium Landing, which features waterfront dining, a fresh fish market, Segway and watercraft rentals, sports fishing/scuba charters, whale watching trips and a kayak center. Visitors can also enjoy a scenic ride on an historic paddle-wheel boat called the "Scarlett Belle." Boat service to the Channel Islands National Park is available at both harbors via Island Packers. www.ventura-usa.com or www.VisitOxnard.com

Overnight in Ventura.

DAY 7

***Continue South to LAX on Hwy 101 for 72 miles, 1 hour, 10 minutes, depending on traffic.
Depart out of Los Angeles.***