

San Luis Obispo County: Hub & Spoke Tours



TWO OR THREE NIGHT ITINERARIES WITHIN SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

DAY 1 – North Coast

Castles and Wildlife

- **Ragged Point:** Snuggled along Highway 1, several hundred feet above the rocky shore of Big Sur, Ragged Point offers stunning views of the Big Sur coastline and the Santa Lucia Mountains. There is a thirty-room hotel, restaurant, gift shop and gas station. www.raggedpointinn.com
- **Piedras Blancas Light Station:** The lighthouse built in 1875, north of San Simeon, is operated by the Bureau of Land Management. The site is being restored and will be open for limited tours.
- **Elephant Seals:** The Elephant Seal rookery is 4.5 miles north of San Simeon (Hearst Castle) on Highway 1. There is a large free parking lot and volunteer docents are available with information about these amazing creatures. The elephant seals use the beach all year long as they mate and give birth. The Elephant Seal population is estimated to be 2,600 individuals.
- **Hearst Castle:** Hearst Castle was originally built as the private estate of art collector and publisher W.R. Hearst. Today it is a California State Park, open to the public daily for guided tours (Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day). **The Experience Tour** is recommended for first time visitors, it combines Tour Number 1 of the estate, with the National Geographic Theatre's giant screen presentation of "Building the Dream" about Mr. Hearst and the Castle. The Visitors Center near San Simeon on Highway 1 is about 8 miles north of Cambria. www.hearstcastle.org
- **Cambria:** This small community sits among the pine covered hills along the coast near Hearst Castle. Home to many artists, the town offers galleries, unique shops, restaurants and cafés.
- **Harmony:** The sign at the edge of town says Population 18. This small village features pottery, a glass blower, Post Office and the **Harmony Valley Winery** tasting room. About five miles south of Cambria on Highway 1.
- **Cayucos:** The beach town of Cayucos is a haven for surfers and fishing enthusiasts, where visitors can find a host of antique shops, restaurants and taverns along its "Old California" Main Street.
- **Morro Bay:** The seaside community of Morro Bay is home to a commercial fishing fleet, which provides area restaurants with the freshest seafood.
 - **Natural History Museum:** The Morro Bay State Park Museum of Natural History (the only one in the California State Park system) sits on a hill overlooking the Morro Bay Estuary and offers panoramic views of the coastline and Morro Rock. The Museum features twenty-six interactive exhibits designed to delight and educate both young and old. Entry fees are \$2 for adults, free to children 16 and under. The museum is open from 10am to 5pm daily (Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day).
 - **Morro Bay Harbor:** The town sits along the bay, guarded by Morro Rock that towers

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576 feet over the harbor entrance. Nature and outdoor activities abound, including bicycling, kayaking, surfing, fishing and whale watching. A bird watcher's paradise, Morro Bay is a Bird Sanctuary, home to over 250 species.

- **Montaña de Oro State Park:** One of California's largest state parks, consisting of 8,000 acres including seven miles of spectacular undeveloped coastline. The Visitor Center in the historic Spooner Ranch House is open daily during the summer, and on the weekends the rest of the year. Costumed docent programs and nature walks are available. www.slostateparks.com/montana_de_oro

DAY 2 – North Coast

Along the Sea Shore

- **Avila Beach:** Avila Beach is a small community, along a sandy cove, with a backdrop of rolling hills. The beach is among the most popular local beaches known for its sunny weather and safe swimming. Piers extend into the bay offering spectacular views of the coastline and beaches. At the end of Avila Beach Road (2 miles) Port Hartford is a working seaport and fishing center with cafés and fine dining on the pier. The Avila Valley area is home to natural hot springs, agricultural adventures and wine tasting.
- **Pismo Beach:** Pismo Beach bills itself as a “Classic California Beach Town” and backs the claim with unspoiled sandy beaches and a 1,200 ft pier lined with fishing enthusiasts. The white, sandy, uncrowded coastline offers a perfect landscape for kite flying, shell gathering and sand castle building.
- **Arroyo Grande:** Quaint downtown area for shopping and located just across the swinging bridge you'll find the South County Historical Society at the Village Green Park featuring historical buildings and exhibits. www.arroyogrande.org
- **Oceano Dunes:** The **Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area** is a unique sand dune environment recognized by scientists, and the public as the finest, most extensive coastal dunes remaining in California. The Oceano Dunes offer visitors recreational activities such as swimming, surfing, surf fishing, camping and hiking, in addition to off-road vehicle activity.
- **Oso Flaco Lake:** Approximately half of the coastal dune-lagoon ecosystem is permanently protected for habitat and passive recreation. A Nature Trail leads pedestrians on a mile-long boardwalk which parallels the Oso Flaco Lake and Creek flowing into the Pacific Ocean. While it is part of the **Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area**, no vehicles are allowed on this protected portion.

DAY 3 – North County

- **Paso Robles:** The northern portion of the county, Paso Robles is the largest appellation and is home to two distinct geographic areas roughly divided by the city and Highway 101.

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- **San Luis Obispo:** This viticultural area includes Edna Valley, Arroyo Grande Valley as well as Avila Valley and Nipomo. The valleys have east-west orientations and are distinguished by the marine air flowing directly into the valleys from the Pacific Ocean that moderates the temperature.
- **Ag Adventures:** In San Luis Obispo County Ag Adventures are as varied as the crops and animals raised here. From petting zoos to cattle drives, small gardens to vast greenhouses, it's all here for you to explore. Meet people who live from the land and want to share their heritage and farm products with you. For more information see our ***Ag Adventure Itinerary***.
www.agadventures.org

DAY 4 – San Luis Obispo

- **Mission San Luis Obispo:** Located in downtown at Chorro and Monterey Street, in Mission Plaza, **Old Mission San Luis Obispo** serves the local Catholic church parish. Visitors are welcome and the gift shop and museum are Monday – Saturday 9:30am to 5pm, closed Sundays. www.missionsanluisobispo.org
- **Mission Plaza:** In front of the Mission, along San Luis Obispo Creek, Mission Plaza is a community area with public artworks, a fountain, creek walks, cafés and shops. The Plaza is also home to—
 - **The Art Center:** Free public galleries of fine arts and crafts by California artists, a gift shop features works by local artists. Open 8am-5pm everyday except Tuesday.
 - **Historical Society Museum:** A private non-profit organization with displays of county history. Open 10am-4pm everyday except Monday and Tuesday.
 - **Children's Museum:** Families explore and experience over 25 “hands-on” interactive exhibits that challenge children to learn while having fun. Parking is available on Monterey Street at Broad, across from the Art Center.
- **Jack House & Gardens:** The Jack Family lived in this 1880's two story Victorian home for over 90 years and much of the family's original furnishings are on display for visitors. The surrounding grounds offer one of the most beautiful old-fashioned garden settings in San Luis Obispo with trees over 100 years old. Call for information about hours and costumed docent tours.
- **Dallidet Adobe:** The 1850's adobe home and gardens are owned by the San Luis Obispo County Historical Society. The Mediterranean garden includes original trees and shrubs, two large redwood trees (grown from seedlings) and a memorial rose garden.
- **Farmers' Market:** On Thursday nights year-round, six blocks of downtown are transformed into a **Farmers' Market and Street Fair** where local farmers offer produce, fruits and flowers. The air is filled with smoke from the numerous oak BBQs offering ribs and tri-tip sandwiches. Be entertained by musicians, puppet shows, dancers and family fun.