"Let's Cruz" Santa Cruz, California

HIGHWAY 1 ROAD TRIPPIN' ADVENTURE ITINERARY

Day One: Highway 1 Road-Trippin' Adventure

Spring and summer bring road trips – adventures with the wind blowing through your hair, music blaring and new sights to discover on the open road. California's Highway I is the perfect place to rev up the engines and cruise the coast, the Central Coast boasts some of the most famous views and pit stops in California, so grab your bags and go! Take your trip through Santa Cruz along Highway I, "two miles" at a time.

Day one's adventure along Hwy I stops at the Seymour Marine Discovery Center at Long Marine Lab. This UC Santa Cruz-affiliated facility offers an up-close view of fascinating sea creatures. The Marine Lab overlooks the bay featuring seawater displays where visitors can hold live aquatic animals, aquariums and marine exhibits illustrating the work of resident scientists. Outside the lab, Ms. Blue, the world's largest blue whale skeleton rests adjacent to the facility and off the sun deck lies the remains of the La Feliz shipwreck, which crashed ashore more than 85 years ago.

A stone's throw away the next adventure awaits, Natural Bridges State Beach is an ideal place for tide pool exploration. Pack a picnic lunch and binoculars for seasonal visits to Natural Bridges, California's only state park butterfly preserve. Each fall marks the return of thousands of monarch butterflies that spend their winters in a protected grove inside the park.

The perfect end to the day is on Swift Street, directly off Hwy I, home to Surf City Vintners. This spirited courtyard on Santa Cruz's west side is a local favorite, filled with wineries, restaurants and shops. Always brimming with something new to see or taste, this lively spot is home to more than a half dozen Santa Cruz County tasting rooms.

Day Two: Ocean Views

Situated between Natural Bridges State Beach and the Santa Cruz Wharf, a two and a half mile scenic path overlooks the bay in a stretch along West Cliff Drive. The path is popular for jogs, bike rides and romantic strolls. Start the day with a cup of coffee and a stroll, down the route, you'll find the Santa Cruz Surfing Museum housed inside the Mark Abbott Memorial Lighthouse. Just off the point from the lighthouse, fearless surfers ride the waves at Santa Cruz's legendary surf spot, Steamer Lane. Adjacent to "The Lane", novice surfers test their mettle at Cowell Beach.

Down from the point, the Santa Cruz Wharf stretches out a half-mile into the waters of the Monterey Bay. Lining the wharf are family-owned fish markets and seafood restaurants just in time for a mid-day lunch stop to refuel. Pop into the wine tasting room and lounge, or buy a Santa Cruz trinket at one of the gift boutiques. If you're in the mood for a bit more adventure, hop aboard a boat for a sightseeing excursion around the bay, or simply sit and watch sea lions lazing in the sun at the end of the wharf.

After an eventful afternoon along West Cliff and the Wharf, stop at the famous Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk off Santa Cruz's Main Beach, where

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TRAVEL TRADE CONTACT: Krista Rupp, Sales & Marketing Manager, krupp@santacruz.org, 831.425.1234 ext.102
MEDIA CONTACT: Christina Glynn, Communications Director, cglynn@santacruz.org, 831.425.1234 ext.112

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the excitement is year-round! Northern California's favorite amusement park, the legendary Boardwalk was also named "Best Seaside Amusement Park," in the world by amusement industry experts. Don't miss a ride on the Giant Dipper, the park's centerpiece, a vintage wooden roller coaster that has thrilled visitors for over 85 years. Celebrate the joys of yesterday aboard seventy-three hand-carved horses that prance proudly to the music from two beautiful antique organs, on none other than the famous Looff Carousel, built in 1911.

Day Three: Wine, History and Antiquing

Shop till you drop, take in live music, fuel up with great food or a glass of sweet Santa Cruz County wine, just a short drive down Highway 1 in the third segment of an exciting road trip adventure!

The next stop off Highway 1 in Santa Cruz County traveling south is Capitola, California's oldest seaside resort town. Founded over 135 years ago, Capitola still radiates the charisma of a vintage beachside town, where galleries and boutiques decorate the quaint streets of Capitola Village. Hit Gayle's Bakery and Rosticceria for a tasty breakfast or brunch, then set out for an afternoon of boutique shopping. Stop by the Capitola Historical Museum housed inside a quaint schoolhouse in the village and pick up a map for self-guided walking tour. Don't forget to schedule a visit Wednesday evening during summer, when twilight concerts are hosted at Esplanade Park's outdoor bandstand, and are an enjoyable way to end the day.

Next stop is the 164-year-old town of Soquel that lies just inland from Capitola. Antique shops featuring everything from heirloom jewelry to early American furniture line the streets of Soquel Village. The hills up above the town are draped with vineyards, and Soquel Village serves as an ideal starting point for self-guided wine tasting tours. A starting point for winery exploration in the Soquel hills is Bargetto Winery, located near the heart of town. Scenic two-lane roads wind up through the mountains to many more wineries north of the town. Sip your way into the sunset with a delightful glass of Santa Cruz County wine; the perfect way to end your day.

Day Four: Hiking, Beaches, Local Veggies and Sunsets

Rev up your engines and start your day with an outdoor adventure as you head to Aptos, home of The Forest of Nisene Marks State Park. Nisene Marks consists of over 30 miles of trails made for hiking, jogging and biking. Picnic tables and barbecue pits are available and a trail camp is located six miles from the nearest parking lot. Nearby, on the beach side of Highway 1, Seacliff State Beach is home to the S.S. Palo Alto, an experimental concrete ship docked at the end of the fishing pier. Active enthusiasts enjoy walking and running on the sand or sidewalks adjacent to the beach. Grab a snack at a nearby deli or store and enjoy the views.

On the way down south, continuing on Highway 1 south, Watsonville's rural charm lies in its fertile soil and Mediterranean climate. Stop at one of many roadside fruit and veggie stands for local fare, perfect for a home prepared coastal meal. If strategic enough, stop for a Friday afternoon trip to downtown Watsonville for the certified Farmer's Market, held every week from 3 to 7 p.m. You'll find delicious local food, flowers and fun, all centrally located near the Watsonville Plaza.

Finish the day with a sunset walk at Sunset or Manresa State beaches, a spot south of Aptos and stretching parallel to inland Watsonville, off Highway 1. In addition to magnificent sunset views, Sunset and Manresa offer abundant fishing, surfing and recreation options.

Thanks for coming along on our trip down California's Highway 1 – remember the great stops for your next visit!

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