

Free Summertime Fun for Travelers in Santa Cruz County

Budget-minded travelers have a plethora of options this summer season

Santa Cruz County delivers added value this summer, helping make family travel plans more affordable. This season, there are plenty of free activities and events to indulge in that won't cost a penny. Santa Cruz County may be known as a Nuclear-Free and Hate-Free Zone, but that's not all that's free! Listed below are the top 12 free things to do and see in Santa Cruz County this summer:



1 The Celebration Continues! The century-old *Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk* is always admission-free.

Enjoy a self-guided free walking tour of this historic seaside gem. The Boardwalk also hosts *Free Friday night summertime concerts*. And Sundays through Thursdays from July 12 – August 20, *Cirque Magnifique* offers two free daily shows featuring an array of gravity-defying acrobatics.

2 Concerts and Movies in California's Oldest Seaside Resort Town:

On Wednesday evenings, you can unwind at *Capitola's Esplanade Park* at a *free twilight concert*. And movie buffs can gather on the sand August 28th and September 4th and 5th for *free movies*. Capitola also offers a *free weekend shuttle*,



which takes visitors from Crossroads Center parking lot on Bay Avenue to Capitola Village.

3 Sample Fine Wine:

An array of wineries in the Santa Cruz Mountains offer *free wine tasting*. Chart

your next wine tasting adventure with *free maps* and guides from the Santa Cruz County Visitors Council.

4 Tour the Historic and Eclectic:

A variety of *free walking tours* bring to life the history of *Capitola*, the logging days of *Boulder Creek*, the Victorian homes of *Watsonville*, the outdoor art and historical architecture of *Santa Cruz* and more. Tour brochures are available at the Santa Cruz County Conference and Visitors Council.



5 Wildlife Watching:

Free weekly guided nature walks of the Wetlands of Watsonville are an up-close way to experience the area's bird population. The Santa Cruz County Conference and Visitors Council's *free new official Birding and Wildlife Kit* is a great way to get your bearings on where to go and what to look for. Or, stroll to the end of *Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf* and watch a *free sea lion show*, as these lumbering creatures sud-

denly acquire a ballerina's grace the moment they hit the water.

6 Discover Museums:

Learn about Santa Cruz surfing legends, the farming methods of a bygone era, and more at admission-free museums such as the *Santa Cruz Surfing Museum*, *Agricultural History Project*, *San Lorenzo Valley Historical Museum*, *Capitola Museum* and the *Aptos History Museum*. The *Museum of Art & History* at the McPherson Center is admission-free the first Friday of every month.



**Santa Cruz County
Conference & Visitors Council**
1211 Ocean Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
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www.santacruzcounty.travel

7 Savor Fine Art: Peruse galleries exhibiting rare glass paperweights, the work of local watercolor painters and more. *The Pajaro Valley Arts Council, Mary Porter Sesnon Gallery at U.C. Santa*



Cruz, Santa Cruz Art League, and Santa Cruz Mountain Arts Center are just some

of the free galleries you'll find around town. *Capitola's Art at the Beach* June 14 and 28, July 12 and 19 and August 2 and 16 and *Santa Cruz's Art on the Wharf* on Sunday, July 19th are other free ways to satisfy your cultural cravings.

8 Take in a Summer Concert: Summertime means at least two opportunities for *free seaside concerts!* Friday nights on Main Beach, original artists and bands from the '60s '70s and '80s, sponsored by the *Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk*, will have you singing along and dancing in the sand to your favorite hits. And in *Capitola Village*, every Wednesday evening, you can unwind at Esplanade Park at a *free twilight concert* while enjoying a picnic supper on the sand.



9 Hike Amid Towering Redwoods: A number of Santa Cruz County parks with great hiking trails are admission-free, including *DeLaveaga Park, Quail Hollow Ranch* and others. State parks like *Big Basin Redwoods State Park* or *Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park* only charge a \$7 parking fee; other parking fees vary. And for more things to do outdoors, Pinto Lake County Park in Watsonville has a new Championship Disc Golf Course. And best of all, it's free to play!

10 Enjoy the Beach: With 29 miles of coastline, finding an *admission-free beach* for playing in the surf or lazing away on the sand is easy. Favorites include *Main Beach, Capitola Beach, Rio Del Mar Beach, Twin Lakes Beach* and *Seabright Beach*.

11 People Watch and Window Shop: Stroll Downtown Santa Cruz, where pedestrian-friendly, tree-lined streets boast unique shops and sidewalk performers. On Saturday, July 18th, partake in a *free downtown tree walk* with an arborist, to view some of Santa Cruz's most unique and grandest trees. On July 11th and 18th, bring your lawn chair downtown and enjoy *free outdoor movies*.

12 Explore Magical Gardens: Wander through bamboo gardens, smell the scents of rare roses, and see exotic plants from around the world. *Bamboo Giant Nursery, Roses of Yesterday and Today, Sierra Azul Nursery* and many other gardens are free to explore. The *UCSC Arboretum* offers free admission the first Tuesday of each month.

In addition, visitors who choose to travel mid-week can save money on lower hotel rates. And, the Santa Cruz County Conference & Visitors Council is making it easier than ever to plan a vacation on-line with packages and specials on www.santacruzcounty.travel. Special summertime activities like surfing, kayaking, and visiting the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk or Roaring Camp Railroads can all be arranged on-line.

If you're on foot, head over to the year-round visitor center at 1211 Ocean Street in Santa Cruz, where you can find free information on a variety of topics, as well as Santa Cruz County Traveler's Guides, Bicycle Adventure Kits, and Birding and Wildlife Viewing Kits. If you're coast side Memorial Day thru Labor Day, the Beach Area Visitor Center adjacent to the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf can provide you with all the information you need to make this year's vacation a memorable experience.


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